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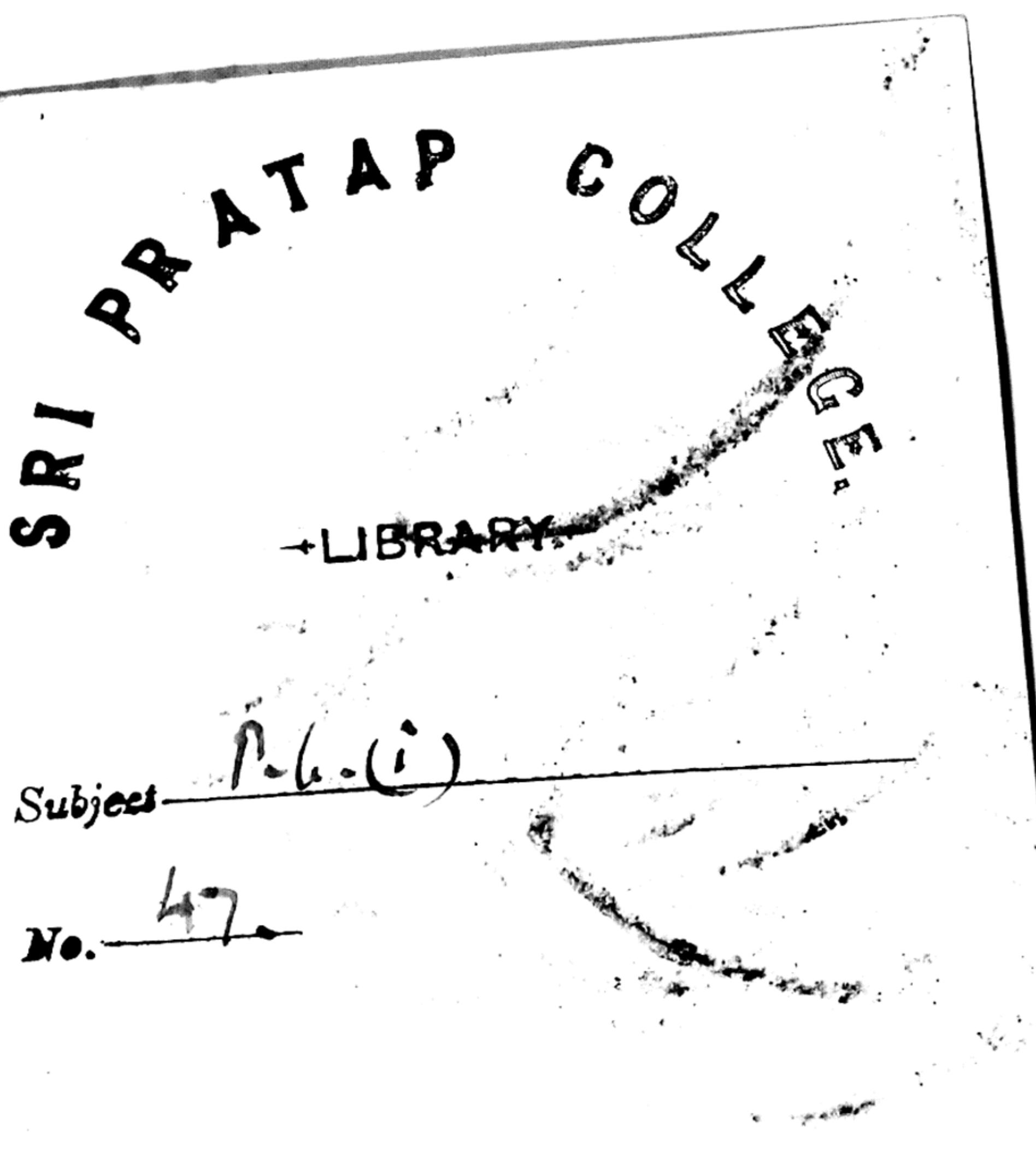
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SWIFT

THE BATTLE OF THE BOOKS

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*General Introduction, Special Introduction,
Notes, Explanations & Problem Questions*

2 FEB 2008

RAVENDRA PRAKASH, M. A.

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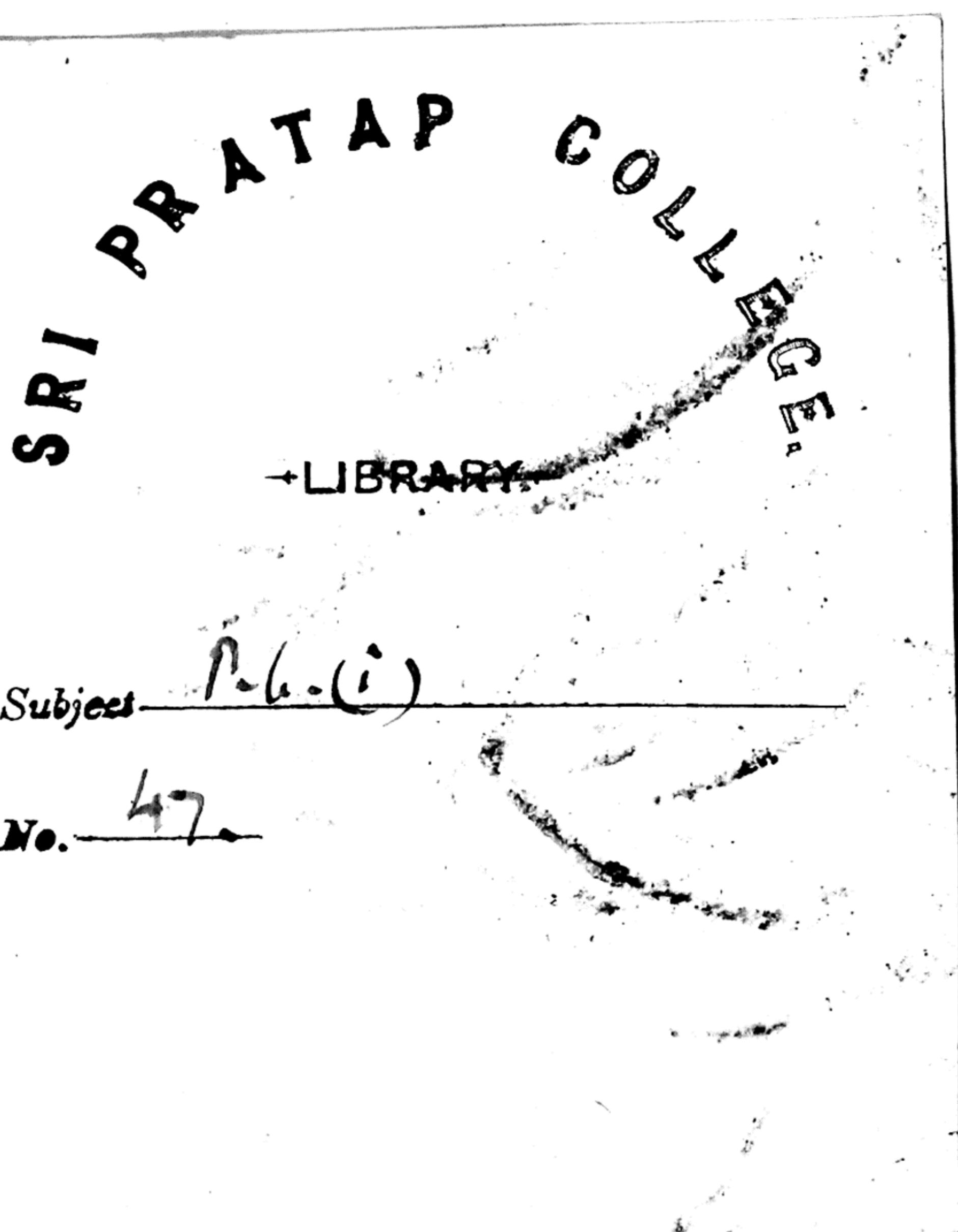
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GENERAL INTRODUCTION



CHAPTER I

THE AGE OF JONATHAN SWIFT

1. THE WRITER & HIS AGE

There is much substance in Eliot's remark that 'a great writer in writing himself writes his times.' For Literature is not an isolated intellectual activity cut off from the main stream of social life and impervious to influences shaping and controlling the thought and life of the people. On the contrary, literature and life have reciprocal influences. Literature may be described as a plant deeply rooted in the soil of life, and the health and colour of its foliage reflect the quality of nourishment the roots suck from the soil. This process of growth and nourishment goes on unseen and unobserved, down beneath the surface of the earth, but all the time it is at work and cannot be denied. In the same way the social, political and intellectual forces at work in an age influence, every minute and unceasingly, the mind of writer and unobtrusively shape and condition his impressions of and responses to the life around him. Being a man of more than organic sensibility, the writer is always alive to the strain and stress of the time, to the agonies and hopes of his fellow-beings, to the ever-changing, ever-renewing kaleidoscopic patterns of life. He cannot but react and respond to dominant tendencies and influences ; he grapples with forces shaping him and in his attempt to understand their meaning he understands his times. Therefore, his writings embody the truth of his personal experience as also the spirit of his age.

The writings of Jonathan Swift bear out the truth of the above observation. Swift was essentially a child of his age and his satires are a comment on the life of the times. To understand the full significance of his work the reader must familiarize himself with the social, political and intellectual background of Swift's age.

Jonathan Swift lived and wrote during the period which in literary history is known as the Augustan Age. In terms of political history, this age spans the three successive reigns of William III, (1618—1702), Queen Anne (1702—1714) and

George I (1714—1727). In the field of politics the leading lights were Bolingbroke, Harley, Viscount Godolphin, Duke of Marlborough, Halifax and Atterbury, while the literary scene was dominated by Daniel Defoe, Prior, Gay, Pope, John Arbuthnot, Addison, Steele and Swift. As it happened, in this age literature and politics got inextricably mixed up and had reciprocal influences. A number of writers wielded the pen effectively either to support or attack one of the two political parties, Whigs and Tories, that dominated the life of the nation then. Commenting on this aspect of this age, A. R. Humphreys says, "literature was in the front line of political struggle until the failure of the 1745."¹ To what an extent politics dominated the mind of people can be guessed from the colossal number of political tracts that were written and published in that age. Addison, that great essayist of the period, had a dig at this excessive pre-occupation with politics. In one of his essays he wrote : "There is scarce any Man in *England*, of what Denomination soever, that is not a Freethinker in Politicks, and hath not some particular Notions of his own, by which he distinguishes himself from the rest of the Community. Our island, which was formerly called a Nation of Saints, may now be called a Nation of Statesman."² Swift also took part in the political quarrels and some of his satires can be best understood if read against the historical background. Hence a brief resume of the political, social and religious life of the times.

THE POLITICAL SCENE

Politically, the seventeenth century is an age of disquieting and momentous events which were to have far-reaching consequences in the constitutional set-up of England. It was during this period that King was stripped of his arbitrary powers and the balance of political forces was settled finally in favour of Parliament.

That Parliament was no longer in a mood to submit to despotic royal authority was made abundantly clear during the reign of Charles I. His refusal to listen to the advice of his Parliament regarding national affairs provoked the bloody Civil War of 1642-45. His unfortunate execution following his defeat, embittered many a royalist heart. And if Cromwell had

1. A. R. Humphreys, *The Augustan World*, p. 127.

2. Joseph Addison, *The Free Holder*, No. 53.

thought that the matter could be settled finally by beheading Charles I, he was mistaken, for, after a short period, the tussle for power between King and Parliament was to be renewed during the reign of James II.

(i) *Failure of James II*

James II, who came to the English throne in 1685, apparently did not learn any lesson from story. He failed to read the signs of the time. At a time when John Locke was expounding his theory of state in terms of a contract between the ruler and the ruled whereby the people invest king with certain powers in order to have a settled life governed by agreed laws, James II still adhered to the theory of Divine Right. He rode roughshod over the wishes of the Parliament and exercised his powers in a highly arbitrary manner. Himself a Roman Catholic, he illegally filled all high positions with Roman Catholics, appointed them to be his chief ministers, gave them positions in the army and navy. He virtually rendered the Parliament defunct by claiming what was called a *Suspending Power* that is, a right of stopping any law being carried out if he were so minded. And when the Parliament refused to repeal the Test Act excluding non-Anglicans from office and to allow him a standing army, he discarded it and got round the law in indirect ways. His high-handedness and despotism antagonised both Whigs and Tories, and his attempt to betray the Church of England made him impossible as a ruler. The Tories and Whigs sunk their own differences for a while and signed the invitation which brought over William of Orange and Mary.

(ii) *The Glorious Revolution*

This historic event is known as the Glorious Revolution of 1688. The results were phenomenal and determined the shape of future political developments. "The principles of the Revolution are operative to his day," this remark of Dyson and Butt brings out its historical significance. The Revolution effectively restricted the "exercise of the royal prerogative," vested the supreme power in Parliament, and ushered in an era of religious toleration, impartial justice and freedom of speech. Prof G. M. Trevelyan thinks that the name "The sensible Revolution" would better sum up the essential nature of the events of 1688, for the revolution truly represents the triumph of the good sense over the wayward and the arbitrary. A. R. Humphreys also shares the opinion of Prof. Trevelyan. He

says, "The Revolution conserved instead of destroying—or if it destroyed it destroyed only infringements of law and order."³

(iii) *War With France and Its Repercussions*

It was during the reign of William III that England came in conflict with France. Apart from the fact the discredited James II was sheltered by Louis XIV, the commercial interests of the two countries and their desire to monopolise world trade drove them to war. Commenting on the rivalry between England and France, Trevelyan writes: "After the Revolution, resistance to France became the first charge on the energies of the new King and of the reconstituted Whig party, and in a scarcely less degree of the nation as a whole."⁴ The fighting went on for eight years but failed to produce a decisive result. It was brought to an end in 1697 by the Treaty of Ryswick. The uneasy peace lasted for four years, when England joined other European countries in fighting the War of the Spanish Succession against France.

While discussing the War it must be remembered that the two political parties had opposite views regarding England's participation in it and eagerly sought the help of eminent writers of the age to write in support of their policies. The fact that no less important writers than Addison, Gay, Steele, Rowe, Parnell, Defoe and Swift actively participated in political controversies testify to the close contacts that existed between the politician and the man of letters.

(iv) *Swift and Whig Ministry*

During the first few years of Queen Anne's reign (1702-1714) the Whigs were in power. They were committed to war and for a while the brilliant victories of the Duke of Marlborough dazzled the Englishmen; however, the bloody and costly war soon made the people sick of it. They began to wonder why peace was not made. The failure of the Whigs to make peace caused their own downfall and prepared the way for capture of power by the Tories in 1710. It was during their four fateful years in office that Swift was drawn into the vortex of political controversy. Swift had earlier tried to ingratiate himself with the Whig ministry of Godolphin. His first political pamphlet, *A Discourse of the Contests and Dissensions Between*

3. A. R. Humphreys, *The Augustan World*, p. 99.

4. *History of England*.

the Nobles and the Commons in Athens and Rome, published in 1701, had won him considerable influence with the Whigs. In return for his services Swift had expected the Whigs to favour him with advancement in the Church and to abolish certain clerical taxes which fell heavily on the poor Irish clergymen. The assurances given by Godolphin never materialised. Moreover, Godolphin's attempt to get the Test Act repealed, hurt Swift, as the latter firmly believed that the Anglican Church should be regarded as *the Church of England* and should be "firmly protected against political encroachments from the dissenters." Therefore when the Tories came into power and fulfilled Swift's desire by withdrawing the odious taxes, he felt much gratified and went over to their side and wrote profusely and regularly in support of their policies.

(v) *Swift—the Tory Journalist*

The years 1710 to 1713 were for Swift full of excitement and achievement. The trust reposed in him by Harley, the Tory leader, gave him a sense of power and released his energies "The intensity of Swift's life during these four years," writes Ricardo Quintana, "his incredible energy as a controversialist, his melodramatic role in the thrilling events following the Tory victory of 1710, his intimate association with those in politics and letters gave to the London of Queen Anne the characteristics on which our imagination still dwells—these lend to his brief period of complete worldly triumph a kind of fascination attaching to no other part of his life."⁵ Besides editing the Tory paper, *The Examiner*, he wrote many tracts, often anonymously, in defence of Harley, Bolingbroke and the Tory ministry. While always preserving an air of sanity and reasonableness, Swift nevertheless wielded his pen devastatingly to expose and discredit the Whigs, particularly Marlborough. The Whigs were described as persons "whose Principle and Interest it was to corrupt our Manners, blind our Understandings, drain our Wealth, and in time destroy our Constitution both in Church and State" : they "found their Accounts only in perpetuating the War."⁶ Wharton and Marlborough were his special targets. Of Wharton he wrote thus :

5. Ricardo Quintana, *The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift*, p. 175.

6. *The Examiner*, November 2, 1710.

I have brought here a Man before you, my Lords, who is a Robber of the Publick Treasure ; an Overturner of Law and Justice ; and the Disgrace, as well as Destruction of the Sicilian Province.

Marlborough was accused of carrying on the war for selfish gains :

We have been Fighting for the Ruin of the Publick Interest, and the Advancement of a Private. We have been fighting to raise the Wealth and Grandeur of a particular Family

Enlightened self-interest demanded that the *Examiner* should not be used for vehement political writings, else it would lose its influence with the general public. Swift therefore gave up its editorship and openly and boldly wrote many pamphlets calculated to rally public opinion round the Tories and to secure condemnation of the policies followed by the Whigs. In 1711 appeared *Some Remarks Upon a Pamphlet Entitled A Letrer to the Seven Lords* and *A New Journey to Paris*. The letter was connected with the secret peace-talks then going on with France and which were to culminate in the Treaty of 1713. Prior, who was sent to Paris to conduct negotiations, was foolishly arrested by a well-meaning but over-suspicious officer of the custom-house and the secret mission became known. *New Journey*, which purported to be an account by Prior's French messenger of his doing in Paris, was "designed to distract the town's attention while peaceterms were being made really behind the scenes." The pamphlet has an unusual interest for Swift, fans because it was in this work that Lemuel Gulliver made his first appearance.

As he got more deeply involved in the unsavoury political controversy, his pamphlets acquired a more pungent tone. In his characteristic manner Swift lampooned and derided his enemies. Nottingham, who had been guilty of voting with the Whigs, was assailed in *An Excellent New Song, Being the Intended Speech of a Famous Orator Against Peace* : Marlborough in the *Fable of the Widow and Her Cat* and in the *Fable of Midas* (1712.) His vicious attack, in *The Windsor Prophecy* (1711), on the Duchess of Somerset was quite unforgivable. Other pamphlets to flow from his pen were *Some Advice to the Members of the October Club* (January 1712), *Some Remarks on the Barrier Treaty* (February 1712), *Letter to A Whig Lord* (July 1712), *Letter of Thanks from My Lord Wharton to the Lord Bp. of S. Asaph* (July 1712), *A Hue and Cry after Dismal*

(July 1712), which Ricardo Quintana terms as "sheer mischief."⁷ *The Importance of the Guardian Considered* (October 1714) and *The Public Spirit of the Whigs* (1714). All these pamphlets make an interesting reading and provide an intimate even if somewhat coloured and partisan account of the dramatic events that swirled round Swift.

As a Tory Journalist, Swift undoubtedly played his part effectively. And though, as Elton says, he served his party with full conviction he never allowed himself to be overwhelmed by party definitions. And here is Herbert Davis' neat summing-up of Swift's manner of handling a political argument :

"Swift never looks round, on lets us look round if he can help it, to see what objections can be made, and he always prefers to move in a straight line, attacking directly straight down the middle, dividing his enemies to the left and to the right, passing through them unharmed and leaving them to their mutual destruction."⁸

(vi) *Swift's Political Views*

A study of Swift's reaction to the political turmoil of his days is interesting insofar as it reveals how his opinions were shaped and determined by the pressure of events. He, like Milton and Dryden, was destined to make an impact on the political life of the nation. He entered the political arena as an ally of the Whig party, but, finding their policies uncongenial, soon went over to the Tory party. This change in his political allegiance has been the subject of endless controversy among his critics. To say that he was a political turncoat would be uncharitable and wide of the mark. True enough, he changed his party but did not change his views. The fact is that Harley's moderate Toryism was "indistinguishable" from Swift's Whiggism and that his desertion of the Whigs was rendered unavoidable by Godolphin's attempt to remove the Test Act and by his lukewarm attitude towards remission of the clerical taxes. Harley's immediate action on the clerical taxes convinced Swift that the Tory party was indeed the Church party and that he should throw his weight with them. The fact that he did not surrender or compromise the principles of the Revolution and that he was never overwhelmed by

7. Ricardo Quintana, *Swift : An Introduction*, p. 111.
8. Herbert Davis, *Jonathan Swift*, 134.

party definition should acquit him once for all of the charge of political opportunism.

(vii) *Attitude Towards Party Feuds*

Bitter party feuds, which were a characteristic of the seventeenth century politics, were the natural outcome of the two-party system, each professing views opposite to those of the other. At times party sentiments ran high causing much bitterness and mutual wrangling. In his essay, *The Mischief of Party Spirit*, Addison in his usual good-humoured ironical manner poked fun at the folly of division. And Swift too did not like this senseless game of charges and counter-charges keeping the nation in a state of emotional tension. Right from the beginning this sordid aspect did not appeal to him—the entry of 20th September 1710 in the *Journal* reflects his utter indifference to it. On that day he wrote : “We shall have a strange winter here between the struggles of a cunning, provoked, discarded party, and the triumphs of one in power : of both I shall be an indifferent spectator.” From his writings one can gather many remarks expressing his strong opinion on the matter. Consider, for example, this high ironical observation made in the sixteenth number of the *Examiner* :

Let any one examine a reasonable honest man of either side, upon those opinions in religion and government which both parties daily buffet each other about, he shall hardly find one material point in difference between them.

(viii) *His Attitude Towards War*

His pamphlets written to support the peace policy of Harley are a standing testimony to his hatred of war and war-hysteria. Time and again he lashed out at the Whig ministry for prolonging war when peace could have been made with honour. The very first number of the *Examiner* was devoted to explaining the necessity of restoring peace immediately. “If,” he wrote, “the war continues some years longer, a landed man will be little better than a farmer at a rack rent, to the army, and to the public funds.” *The Conducts of the Allies* (1711) brilliantly argued the same point.

Critics like Herbert Davis and Irvin Ehrenpreis have called attention to the moral satire of some of the passage in the *Gulliver's Travels*, where Captain Gulliver describes the English army. Through subtle hints Swift manages to put it across that

war is a manifestation of man's brutality and that 'a paid army in peace-time is needed only to maintain the power of a tyrant.' Gulliver's elaborate description of "such chargeable and extensive wars" creates impression of the English being a quarrelsome people. And when the King of Brobdingnag wonders why the English keep a standing army in peace, the whole passage is enlivened with the malicious wit of Swift :

"Above all, he was amazed to hear me talk of a mercenary standing army in the midst of peace, and among a free people. He said, 'if we were governed by our own consent in the persons of our representatives, he could not imagine of whom we were afraid, or against whom we were to fight, and would hear my opinion, whether a private man's house might not better be defended by himself, his children, and family, then by a half a dozen rascals picked up at a venture in the streets, for small wages who might get an hundred times more by cutting their throats.'"⁹

(ix) *The End of Political Career*

As it happened, Swift's political career came to an abrupt end in 1914. At that time his reputation among the Tories stood high and he had started dreaming of a bright future in church ; but his hopes were to be rudely shattered by a cruel stroke of luck. The internal dissension in the Tory party had considerably weakened it, and the rumour that its leaders were secretly in negotiation with James II hastened its downfall. Swift's attempts to patch up the quarrel between St. John and Harley and to hold the party together proved to be of no avail. Its inevitable fall and the death of Queen Anne in 1714 brought to a close what Swift considered to be the most brilliant phase of his life. "Fortune turned rotten at the very moment it grew ripe"—thus commented Swift and the remark reflects the deep dismay he felt at the reversal of fortune.

As a Tory Journalist Swift had antagonised the Whigs and he could not hope to advance in politics as also in church until they remained in office. And this time their term of office was to last for nearly half a century. From 1714 to 1761 the Whigs were in power. Under them England gained political stability

9. Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 105 (Louis A. Landa's edition published by Methuen & Co. Ltd., London.)

so badly needed to calm the ruffled feelings of people. Realising that his fortunes were now doomed, Swift left England for Dublin to take up Deanery of Saint Patrick's Cathedral. Except for brief visits to England in 1726 and 1727, Swift passed the rest of his life there.

III. THE SOCIAL SCENE

(i) *New Social Philosophy*

The Social Philosophy of the Augustans was to a large extent determined by the events of the preceding era. The passionate political and religious quarrels of the mid-seventeenth century had left the society in a state of utter exhaustion and brought home a full realisation of the dangers of allowing passion to run wild. The Augustans therefore adopted social stability and social sympathy as their ideals ; and so they aimed at establishing a society which would shun "the hazards of war and fanaticism" and instead inspire people to live in "widest harmony." To the renaissance-oriented imagination of the Elizabethan man seemed to be a creature of infinite possibilities, the measure of all things ; but the Augustans, in keeping with their social philosophy, considered man primarily as a social being governed by universally acceptable standards. Men of letters and philosophers were rarely troubled by metaphysical speculations and seldom questioned the foundations of the existing moral and social order ; for them the vision of man in society, his conduct and aspirations, the reform of morals and the refinement of manners were enough. Remarks A. R. Humphreys : "By instinct and intention men strove for a congenial society : they pondered on the principles of a civilised community and hoped to extend doctrines of 'sympathy,' on both a Christian and a rational basis, as widely as possible."¹⁰

That the moral self-criticism of the age never touched the foundations of the social structure or questioned its validity was due as much to its aversion to radical changes as also its belief that it has been ordained by God. "A revolutionary point of view would have been considered rather than wicked."¹¹ The division of society into rich and poor classes was accepted as part of the divine order. Though the rich might help ease the burden of the poor, yet poverty itself was never condemned.

10. A. R. Humphreys, *The Augustan World*, p. 1.

11. Dyson and Butt, *Augustans and Romantics*, p. 23.

The society conveniently forgot those who fell by the wayside.

(ii) Rise of Trade & Commerce

Though stability was sought in social structure, changes were taking places in other spheres. With no worry for the present and little doubts about the future, the Augustans achieved remarkable progress in trade and commerce. National wealth multiplied many times over. The lure of the city made people flock to London, which by that time had become the centre of activity and excitement. If Defoe's *Tour Thro' Great Britan* describes the joyous life of the country and its various charms, it also gives a vivid picture of London, humming with activity and dotted all over by newly constructed buildings. The pages of Gay's *Trivia* and Ned Ward's *London Spy* provide an intimate account of the life of the time. The essays of Addison take us through the drawing-room of the middle classes as also through the theatres, street scenes, through fashionable world of the elegant ladies and coffee-house gossip.

(iii) Literature & Politics

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the age, say Dyson and Butt, is "the identity of outlook shared by the governing classes and the intelligentia."¹² The politicians required writer of talent to carry on their propaganda through the press, and celebrities like Addison, Swift, Steele, Gay and Prior actively participated in politics. Poets and wits, moreover, were offered political and diplomatic careers and given the honour they deserved. Addison through his service rendered for the Whigs, rose to be a Secretary of the State ; Prior was sent to Paris on an important diplomatic mission ; Swift wielded considerable influence during the term of the Tory party. This harmonious atmosphere of the age presents a sharp contrast to our own age in which the writer is an outsider, condemned to live in his Ivory Tower.

(iv) Rise of the Middle Class

One of the most significant events of the Augustan age was the phenomenal rise of the middle class. The rapid expansion of business had brought them a pivotal role in national economy, while the vindication of Parliament's position as the supreme executive body had given it a say in political matters ; but their influence was to be felt in other spheres too. The

12. Dyson and Butt, *Augustans and Romantics*, p. 23.

Middle class demanded a literature of social realism. Therefore, whereas the Elizabethan literature and Restoration tragedy had stressed the heroic passions and created figures of huge dimensions, the typical Augustan work was a record of normal life. Not Hamlets and Lears, but men and women very near to the real life of the time live in the pages of Fielding, Defoe, Smollett, Addison and Steele. And since literature catered mainly to the taste of middle class, it had to work within certain limitations. The writers restricted themselves to a limited range of attitudes and emotions ; to characters recognizable for their representative truth ; to well-known literary forms.

(v) *Clubs and Coffee-houses*

Social clubs and journalism also owed their growth to the influence of the middle class. Impelled by a desire to cultivate the glitter and elegance of aristocrats, the middle class brought into existence a number of societies for the improvement of manners and morals. Social clubs were founded to enable thinkers and public figures to meet together and discuss things that interested them. Round each club were grouped persons sharing common views and very soon these clubs began to exercise considerable influence in political and social spheres. Needless to say, the meetings were marked by sparkling wit and scintillating talks which were regarded as necessary qualities of a sophisticated person. Two of the most famous clubs of the period were the Kit-Kat club and the Club of Martin Scribblers. Swift was associated first with the Brother's Club, and later with the Kit-Kat Club. Commenting on this aspect of the age, Humphreys says : "Clubs of all sorts, professional, intellectual, artistic, political, musical, literary, eccentric, or merely companionable, were signs of a community conscious of similar tastes, and ready semi-formally to organise its growing sociability."¹⁸

Perhaps the most interesting institution of the age is the coffee-house. It became the meeting place of wits and thinkers, politicians and journalists, philosophers and literatures and soon became an indispensable part of social life. It did not contribute merely to "advance conversation and friendship" as Swift wrote to Stella ; it created the intellectual climate conge-

nial to such geniuses as Addison, Steele, Swift and others. It is said that at that time there were nearly 500 coffee-houses in London. Addison patronised Button's, Goldsmith went to Grecian ; Cowper frequented Dick's, St. James's was the meeting place of the Whigs, while the Tories patronised White's Smyrna was the rendezvous of Swift.

IV. RELIGION AND PEOPLE

(i) *Religious Controversies*

The Age of Swift was not free from religious controversies. The repeated allusion in the literature of the period to religious disputes show how seriously public in general and thinkers in particular took matters relating to faith. The continued spate of tracts from disputing factions never allowed people to forget the controversy, and prompted *The Guardian* to remark, "there is not any where, I believe, so much Talk about Religion as among us in England." Addison took upon himself the task of educating public in religion, and the sermons that flowed from his pen were read with delight and interest. Swift's *Journal to Steele* and *Examiner's* papers contained among other things reflections on church and on the folly of division. A large part of his *A Tale of A Tub* was occupied by a highly satirical account of the quarrels of the churches. The three brothers, Peter Martin and Jack, allegorically stand for Roman Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans. Swift claimed that the book was written for "the universal improvement of mankind" and that it satirised not religion but the abuse of religion. His tract, *The Sentiment of a Church of England, Man with Respect to Religion and Government*, written in a serious strain, sounded a warning to extremist. His other important religious tracts were *An Argument Against Abolishing Christianity* (1708), *A Project for the Advancement of Religion and the Reformation of Manners* (1709), *A Preface to the B—p of S-r-m's Introduction* (1713) and *A Letter to a Young Gentleman*.

What then were the religious controversies that caused such widespread concern ? The situation can be briefly summed up thus. At that time there were three leading parties, Roman Catholics, Anglicans, and Puritans, holding widely divergent and antithetical views. By the time of Swift two of these had come to be distinctly identified with political parties, with the result that the church whose party was in office enjoyed advant-

ages denied to the other. Throughout the Age of Swift the different churches carried on heated controversy to vindicate their own views and discredit the views of others. Reflecting on this aspect Humphreys remarks : "a Churchman, in the eyes of a Methodist or freethinker a was Laodicean ; a Methodist, in the eyes of a Churchman or freethinker, was a fanatic ; and a freethinker, in the eyes of a Churchman or Methodist, was a coxcomb."¹⁴

As Ricardo Quintana has pointed out the Post-Restoration England ceased "to feel and think symbolically ;"¹⁵ reason was its guide. In such an age it was but natural that Roman Catholicism, which rested in sheer faith, and Puritan Dissent, which rested in sheer inspiration, should lose much of their force. The influence of Roman Catholics had already decreased since the passing of the Test Act in 1673 excluding them from civil and military office. They were suspected of working in league with the discredited Stuart kings and were generally distrusted. The Dissenters, however, were a constant source of irritation to Anglican Church. They were those who had refused to conform to the rituals of the Anglican Church as enjoyed by the Act of Uniformity (1662) and had organised themselves into small but powerful sects. Though there were differences among them yet Presbyterians, Arians, Socians, Antinomians, Quakers, Muggletonians and Anabaptists were all called Dissenters.

(ii) *Swift's Attitude*

Swift's attitude towards religion was that of a follower of the Established Church or Anglican Church. He shunned the extremities of both Catholics and Dissenters, and believed in rational faith. He rejected the arguments of Deists also, for, as Ricardo Quintana has pointed out, he believed that "Christianity was more than blind faith, but what was given through Revelation lay beyond the reach of any rational process.

V. PHILOSOPHICAL TENDENCIES

The Augustan Age is variously described as the Age of Enlightenment, the age of Reason, or as the Age of Good Sense, because during this period man weaned himself away from idealism and instead took reason as his sole guide in all

14. op. cit., p. 139.

15. *Swift : An Introduction*. p. 31.

matters. The impact of Newton's theories and of the deliberation of the Royal Society, founded in 1660 brought about a change in the world of thought : abstract speculations, which had occupied the philosophers of the past, were discarded in favour of an analysis of man's nature, his relations with community, and the origins of society. The practical bias of the times is apparent in all writings of the period. Even the very titles of books indicate it. It was not mere chance that great philosopher of the age, John Locke, gave to his best work, the title *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690). Hume wrote *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739) and *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding* (1748) ; Shaftesbury gave *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711) ; and Hartley's contributions was *Observations, on Man* (1749). All this shows how the Augustans loved to dwell on real things —“on physical phenomena and the nature of mankind as deduced from observation.”

This shift in thought must be traced back to the great French philosopher Rene Descartes (1596—1650). He sought to separate science from religion, so that the nature of physical world might be studied objectively. His famous dictum *Cogito ergo sum*—I think, therefore I am, encouraged a rational, mathematical approach to the problem of knowledge. He claimed that truths about the existent world could be discovered by reasoning only.

Hobbes, whose writings dominated the Post-Restoration English mind, published the *Leviathan* in 1651. In it he defined the aims and methods of thought thus : “Reason is the pace ; Increase of Science (knowledge) the way ; and the Benefit of mankind the end.” The conclusions arrived at by him were to excite keen controversy among thinkers of the Age of Swift. He asserted that the universe was essentially material and man himself a mere creature of impulses. His materialism was to provoke severe comments from Swift. The Clothes Philosophy expounded in Section II of *A Tale of A Tub* is a direct attack on Hobbes' materialism. Swift has no patience with a universe as a lump of matter. In *On the Trinity*, he said : “Reason itself is true and just, but the reason of every particular man is weak and wavering perpetually swayed and turned by his interests, his passions, and his vices.”

Swift's approach is typical of his age. If the age distrusted mysticism and supernatural interpretation of things, it also rejected the materialism of Hobbes. The *via media* was found by Locke. He viewed man as a rational creature and asserted that knowledge is derived primarily by dwelling not on "the vast ocean of being" but on data collected from the world of ordinary experience.

VI. LITERARY SCENE—THE ADVENT OF NEOCLASSICISM

(i) *The Growth of the Classicism*

The Age of Swift falls in the Neo-classical period of English Literary history—the term 'neo-classicism' being used to describe the shift in literary taste which first became perceptible in the latter half of the seventeenth century and which continued to dominate literary scene until the emergence of Romanticism towards the end of the eighteenth century. This change was not just a historical accident ; it was the logical outcome of an age which was strong in social sense and which made rationalism its basic attitude in thought and life. Viewed from this angle, the classicism of the Age of Swift would appear to be deeply rooted in and a true expression of the life of the people and deriving its strength from the peculiar temper of the society. A look back to the Renaissance would tell us how far the English society had come from the days of Shakespeare and Spenser. The Elizabethan literature was inspired by a humanism that assigned man a central place in the scheme of things and considered him primarily as an individual, having his own aspirations and ambitions and not just a social creature. The value attached to the individual was the main inspiration behind a literature that bequeathed to posterity such gigantic and awe-inspiring characters as Faustus, Hamlet, Lear, Macbeth and Othello. The Renaissance literature was one of exuberance and passion, of imagination run wild. But by the time we come to the Augustan period the whirligig of time had rendered old patterns in taste obsolete and created new ones. The Renaissance had become a spent up force, and new ideas had to be found to take its place. And these new ideas were imported from France and thus began the neo-classical age in English letters.

Neo-classicism in France had its heyday during the reign of Louis XIV. Though the new movement found a natural affinity in the Latin writers, yet, as Elton has pointed out, the subtlest leaven of classicism was neither Latin letters nor the social atmosphere ; it was the rational spirit in the shape inherited from Descartes.¹⁶ The Impact of Descartes was to influence letters in three ways : (i) the first Cartesian formulation said that truth could be reached only through reason : so the mind must be cleared of fanciful ideas and vain presumptions ; (ii) all expressions must be universally understood and, therefore, it must be logical, lucid and simple ; (iii) all non-human world should be thrusted into background, for "man is the proper study of man." The acceptance of Cartesian formulations meant banishment of imagination, of individual peculiarities, of highly stylized writings, from the realm of literature. The trend was towards the creation of a literature which would concern itself mainly with man as a social-being and his universally valid and generally understood aspects. A literature of inwardness and imagination was then clearly out of question. This rationalism was the main trait of the neo-classical movement.

(ii) French Influence

In France, the movement was popularised by Pierre Corneille, Jean Racine, Moliere, La Fontaine and Boileau. These writers admired the Perfection of form, poise and balance, elegance and polish, correctness and clarity, which they discovered in the works of ancient writers like Virgil, Horace, Lucilius, Persius, Theocritus and Homer. The order and harmony and clarity of expression which distinguished the works of ancient writers then became the ideals of the eighteenth century classicism. Boileau, that intrepid critic and bigoted apostle of neo-classicism, proclaimed the supremacy of ancients and codified rules derived from their writings. As the passionate and excessively imaginative writings of the moderns violated all the rules of correct writings, they were pronounced to be disorderly and wild. They presented a spectacle of a nature without method. in his *L'Art Poetique*, Boileau insisted that writers should follow not strange and uncommon aspects of life, but 'nature,' that is to say the common, familiar aspect of normal human life which can be universally recognised.

16. Oliver Elton, *The Augustan Ages*, p. 8.

The Post-Restoration England could not remain unaffected by what was going on in the neighbouring country. Increasingly the world of letters came under the influence of the new movement emanating from France. We can discern the voice of Boileau in the writings of Pope, who was the representative poet of the age. His *Essay on Criticism* contains many echoes of French critic. Consider, for example this:

"Those Rules, of old discover'd, not devised,
Art nature still, but nature methodised."

(iii) *Ancient-Modern Controversy*

This controversy regarding the supremacy of the ancients over the moderns was to be epitomised in swift's *The Battle of the Books*. His patron Sir Temple had paid his homage to the ancients in his *Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning*, in the course of which he had praised the achievements of two spurious writers. His paper provoked a rejoinder from Richard Bentley and soon a controversy was afoot in England—a controversy which recalled the dialogue that had earlier taken place in France between the supporters of the ancients and of the moderns. To us, the controversy is interesting inasmuch as it reveals the attitudes that lay behind the argument. To accept the supremacy of the ancients was to tacitly accept that since the forces of nature remain the same, no progress was possible in the sphere of literature. Though Swift, in *The Battle*, refused to go into the theoretical aspects of the controversy, yet he surely must have understood the larger issues involved.

(iv) *The Emergence of the New Spirit in England*

In England, the ground for the emergence of neo-classicism was prepared by Dryden and Walter and by the courtiers of Charles II. By the end of the seventeenth century, the new spirit had firmly entrenched itself and begun to speak through the work of Swift, Addison, Shaftesbury, Arbuthnot, Gay, Prior and Pope (to name only the better known writers.) They were guided by the neo-classical rationalism in the choice of subjects and the mode of expression. The essays of Addison constantly exhorted men to be guided by good sense and reason are remarkable for their lucidity and simplicity. Pope established the heroic couplet as universally acceptable vehicle of poetic expression, and in his own poetic works conscientiously avoided deviating from known standards. The polish and refined elegance of his verses were in the best traditions of

classicism. Swift, too, was a neo-classicist in his reliance upon reason and hatred of imagination and enthusiasm. Ricardo Quintana sums up Swift's viewpoint in the following words : "Reason should be supreme. When it is overthrown by Folly, vaporous enthusiams arise from lower faculties. It is so in religion, in morals, in literature."¹⁷ Houyhums, in *Gulliver's Travels*, are shown as better creatures for they 'cultivate reason and are governed by it.' Swift's bitter attacks on Dissenters were actuated by his distrust of enthusiasm : the age has taught him to view things rationally. In his own characteristic manner he disparages imagination in the tract, *The Mechanical Operation of Spirit*.

To sum up then, the neo-classical movement implied reliance upon reason rather than imagination, upon lucidity, balance, perfection of form, clarity of outline and expression and acceptance of the ancients as final authority in matter of taste.

(v) *Evolution of prose Style*

Oliver Elton, in his remarkable book, *The Augustan Ages*, has pointed out how the new spirit helped bring important changes in letters. The one very important result was the emergence of a natural prose style. The growth of experimental sciency demanded a style which could express ideas effectively without obscuring them. The highly passionate and surcharged style of Milton and of Thomas Browne was not the fit medium of expression for a people who believed in logical exposition and aimed above all at clarity of expression and intelligiblity. "The Royal Society," declared the Bishop of Rochester, "have exacted from all their members a close, natural way of speaking ; positive expressions, clear sense, a native easiness, bringing all things as near the mathematical plainness as they can ; and preferring the language of artisans, countrymen, and merchants before that of wits and scholars." One has only to turn to the prose of Addison and Steele to see how well the ideal was put into practice. Using a vocabulary purged of all archaic and unfamiliar words, Addison and Steele, evolved a style remarkable for its simplicity and naturalness, flexibility and persuasiveness. It lent itself equally well for serious writings such as Addison's essays on Milton's appreciation to lighter pieces such as *The Mischief of Party Spirit*.

17. *The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift*, p. 65.

The clear and forceful style of Swift has won him encomiums from critics and admirers. He is never insipid or stale ; the force of a highly logical mind is felt behind all his utterances.

The Augustan Age was not an age of poetry but of prose. Poetry is obviously impossible in an age in which imagination is suspected, inwardness is ridiculed, and the attention is on social and political problems. The emergence of a direct prose style facilitated the growth of prose. It must be remembered that by the end of the seventeenth century the middle classes had come to occupy a significant place in society ; their demand for a literature of social realism, concerned with the world of common experience, could only be fulfilled through proseworks written in a language intelligible to all. Hence the growth of new literary species like the essay and the novel. The creative vigour of Age needed a medium flexible enough for discourse on matters serious, playful and argumentative, and the essay answered well to the needs of the writers. Addison used it to reflect upon manners and morals of the age, to ridicule its follies without abusing it, to laugh at the oddities of persons deviating from the norm ; Steele enriched it with deeper reflections and the warmth of his humanity ; Defoe used it to express his opinion on a wide range of subjects, ranging from domestic and foreign policy to "the weekly history of Nonsense, Impertinence, Vice and Debauchery ;" Swift turned it into a perfect vehicle for the exercise of his satiric wit.

So the Age of Swift was an age of reason. It championed the principles of neo-classicism and brought new forces into play. Its literary achievements lay mostly in the fields of prose and it can justly be proud of having produced celebrities like Swift, Pope, Addison, Gay, Prior, Steele and Arbuthnot.

CHAPTER II

SATIRE

I. WHAT IS SATIRE ?

Satire is not a distinct literary genre—it is rather an attitude towards a *subject*, an attitude of indignation at human follies and incongruities. The writer may express his *saeva indignation* in prose or verse or in drama. In England satire had its heyday during the Augustan Age. The political, religious and philosophical controversies that raged during the period divided men of letters into mutually hostile school's thought and called into play a tendency of critical judgement which attacked all that was spurious in thought and morals and manners and aimed at correcting society through castigation of its follies and weaknesses. Dryden and Pope were the chief exponents of verse satire, while a host of writers like Swift, Daniel Defoe, Addison, Steele, Mandeville and Arbuthnot used prose for their satire.

A consideration of satire begs more questions than it can answer. What is the nature of satire ? Is it allied to comic spirit ? Is it a good-humoured expression of a sense of incongruity in human affairs or an expression of moral indignation at human failings ? What is the relation of satire proper to other allied forms like the lampoon, the parody, the invective the allegory, and the fable ?

(i) *Its Moral Purpose*

Humbert Wolfe holds a high opinion of the office of a satirist. His work is essentially moral: "what impels him to write is not less the hatred of wrong and injustice than a love of the right and just,"¹⁸ He is a sort of preacher who aims at exposing wickedness and vice, not by delivering sermons, but by raising a satiric laughter. His aim is not so much to create new objects of beauty and wonder as to destroy that which ails the society. "He is not to give life, but rather to kill the causes of spiritual death. His is the function of Jere-

18. Humbert Wolfe, *Notes on English Verse Satire*, p. 7.

miah without the lamentation, of Irish without the fiery thunderbolt of divine endorsement."¹⁹ In writing *Gulliver's Travels* Swift was actuated by a desire to attack, and so remove the evils found among the Yahoos and to bring them to the path of wisdom and virtue. He makes his aim clear in a letter written by Captain Gulliver which was added to the Faulkner edition of the *Travels* in 1735 :

I do in the next place complain of my own great want of judgement in being prevailed upon by the entreaties and false reasonings of you and some others, very much against my opinion, to suffer my travels to be published. Pray bring to your mind how often I desired you to consider, when you insisted on the motive of public good ; that the Yahoos were a species of animals utterly incapable of amendment by precepts or examples ; and so it hath proved ; for instead of seeing a full stop put to all abuses and corruptions, at least in this little island, as I had reason to expect ; behold, after six months' warning, I cannot learn that my book hath produced one single effect according to my intentions.....And it must be owned that seven months were a sufficient time to correct every vice and folly to which Yahoos are subject, if their natures had been capable of the least disposition to virtue or wisdom.

Apropos of Swift's complaint, satire may not bring in result immediately perceptible, but it does make public conscience uneasy and so prepare the way for effective social action against evils.

(ii) *Satire—An Attitude of Indignation*

The aim of the satirists, then, is "to mend the world as far as they are able." (Swift's words,) Humbert Wolfe echoes the same opinion when he says, "The satirist may have his aim the amendment of mankind" The definition given in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* runs as follows: "Satire, in its literary aspect, may be defined as the expression in adequate terms of the sense of amusement or disgust excited by the ridiculous or unseemly, provided that humour is a distinctly recognizable element, and that the utterance is invested with literary form. Without humour satire is invective ; without literary form, it

19. Humbert Wolfe, *Notes on English Verse Satire*, p. 8.

is mere clownish jeering." This is a useful definition to start with ; but it suffers from the defeat of putting emphasis at a wrong place. Satire is not pure ridicule—it is much more than this. A sense of moral indignation is an essential ingredients of satire. Indignation, says Louis I. Bredvold, in a paper contributed to *English Literature History*, implies a judgement which our moral integrity obliges us to make. Indignation must be carefully distinguished from mere ridicule or derision. Ridicule or derision may be purely personal and are, therefore, satire of a low order. Properly speaking, these words are to be associated with the lampoon. But indignation is to be associated with higher satire. It unlike derision is ethical in nature and implies more than a perception of comic incongruities ; "it is a reproach addressed to some responsible individual who has deviated from a right and reasonable standard."

And it is this element of indignation that distinguishes the satire from the novel. The novelist may also expose the weaknesses of his characters, but he does so with a view to gain the reader's sympathy, and not to prompt him to condemn human weaknesses. Perhaps we love the characters of Dickens just because of their oddities. Shakespeare presents Sir Toby (*The Twelfth Night*) and Falstaff (*Henry IV*) in such a way that notwithstanding their moral failings we love and like them. But the purpose of a satirist like Swift is to expose man's follies in order to secure their condemnation. Therefore, rightly viewed, satire may be considered as an attitude of indignation towards "the avoidable errors, vices, and absurdities of life."

11. DEVELOPMENT OF SATIRE

The earliest manifestations of satiric spirit are to be found in Greek literature. To Aristophanes goes the credit of turning satire into an instrument of morality and social reformation. His plays are a remarkable blending of pungent satire and exalted poetry. He attacked the affectations and inflated opinions prominent in his days. *The Frogs* and *The Wasps* are his most notable satires.

Next come the Roman satirists. "The Romans liked to think that they had a natural turn for satire." The earliest Roman satirists are Cicero, Petronius and Lucian ; but satire had to wait for some time before it really came into its own with the arrival on literary scene of Horace, Juvenal and Martial. The satire of Horace (68—8 B. C.) is genial, playful

and persuasive. Suavity and urbanity is written all over his writings. But by general consent, Juvenal is regarded as the most powerful satirist. Elton calls his satires "splendid and clamorous fight."²⁰ He is caustic and outspoken. He is typical of those writers whose greatness is to be measured in terms of their destructive power. He was the scourge of his age. Says Humbert Wolfe, "Rome was for him populous with skeletons, and since there was no God of damnation, like that of the Jews, Juvenal invented one in his own image."²¹

Among other important Continental satirists we may mention Cervantes, the Spaniard who created that immortal figure Don Quixote. Rabelais (1494—1553), Voltaire (1694—1778) and Anatole France (1844—1924). The last three have bequeathed to French literature satires of rare brilliance. Rabelais' satire is noted for its ribaldry and broad humour. Voltaire exhibits great intellectual force coupled with an incisive insight into human follies. Anatole France is a latter-day writer.

III. ENGLISH SATIRE

Satire is essentially a product of a civilized society, having a set of its own values to guide the social conduct of its members.

It is an expression of critical rather than creative spirit. After the religious satire of Langland, a fourteenth century poet, and the humorous verse stories of Chaucer, England had to wait for about two centuries before satire proper could be produced. During the Renaissance the satiric spirit was at abeyance. True, it manifests itself here and there in comedies but it cannot be considered as satire proper.

The satiric spirit caught on in the 17th and 18th century. The political and religious quarrels of time necessitated the development of a literary weapon designed to attack rival opinions. With the shifting of attention to social life and the excitement caused by coffee-house gossip, people were quick to take note of human foibles and weaknesses. Dryden produced a series of incomparably brilliant verse satires in which he hanged, quartered and impaled his opponents. Written against the background of political events of the time, *Absalom and Achitophel* has come to be regarded as one of the finest satires

20. Oliver Elton, *The Augustan Ages* p. 137.

21. Humbert Wolfe, *Notes on English Verse Satire*, p. 23.

in the English language. The thrust of Dryden's verses, his powers of portrayal and argumentation made him a great satirist. His successor, Alexander Pope (1688—1744), was actuated more by personal malice than moral indignation. *Dunciad* will be remembered for force of its invective. His representative work is *The Rape of the Lock* (1714) in which he describes the social vanities in a half-ironical, half humorous way.

The development of prose satire was the work of indomitable souls like Defoe and Swift. Defoe's pamphlets have a charm of their own. Swift, the mad parson, is undoubtedly the greatest satirist in English. His satires cover wide field, from religious controversies to political and literary quarrels. Addison and Steele brought playful satire into practice. Fielding and Smollett discovered new opportunities for the exposure of folly in the novel.

The Romantic Age was dominated by imaginative literature. The satirical spirit fell mute. Byron was perhaps the only major literary figure to turn to satire.

We now come to the Victorian age. Though in their novels Thackeray, George Eliot and Butler reflected upon human wickedness and vices of the age, yet the term 'satire' cannot be applied to their writings. However in our own age satire is gradually coming back into vogue. Aldous Huxley comes very near to Swift. His hatred of humanity reminds one of the latter's misanthrope, but he lacks the incisiveness and force of Swift. George Orwell (1903—1950) wrote political satires. His *1984* and *Animal Farm* occasioned considerable excitement in the world of letters. The satiric spirit is also seen in the poems of T. S. Eliot and in the novels of Evelyn Waugh.

IV. SATIRE IN THE AUGUSTAN AGE

It has become customary to refer to the Augustan Age as the 'golden age of satire.' Basie Willey calls it "exceptionally fertile in satiric work." "More satire and better satire was written then than in any other period of English literature." One is struck by the consistent brilliance of large number of tracts and polemics. Daniel Defoe alone is credited with having written some 250 papers and pamphlets."²² It will be fruitful to enquire into the reasons for the rise of satire in this age.

22. Oliver Elton, *The Augustan Ages*, p. 292.

(i) *Social Temper of The Age*

“We are refined,” Lord Chesterfield to his son, “and plain manners, plain dress, and plain diction, would as little do in life, as acorns, herbage, and the water of the neighbouring well, would do at table.” His observation reflects the temper of the age. The old values that had sustained men in the past and served as ideals to live by had died ; and the new values are indicative of the change that had come over in man’s attitude : “men are more civilized. more calculating perhaps, more compliment, more rational more respectable.”²³ The refinement of civic and political life became the ideal of the age. To be civilized was to be elegant and witty in talks, polished and sophisticated in manners, reasonable and logical in views. In other words, the externals of life came to be accepted as the yardstick of civilization, as the final values of the society. The coffee-house gossip was the favourite pastime of the upper circles of the society and it encouraged scandals and lampoons. The political controversies had already divided men of letters along party lines, and from their pen flowed a number of brilliant satires, either defending or attacking the current political views. As Humphreys puts it, “literature was in the front-line of political struggle until the failure of the 1745.” Prior, Addison, Swift, Defoe, Rowe, Parnell and a host of other writers, all of them made their impact felt in the world of politics. The political writings of Jonathan Swift kicked up vehement controversy and provoked equally sharp retorts from his opponents.

While political controversy necessitated the development of biting satire, the general desire for improvement of manners and morals brought into play the mild and playful satire of Addison and Steele. Macaulay called Addison a ‘great satirist who alone knew “how to use ridicule without abusing it, who, without inflicting a wound, effected a great social reform, and who reconciled wit with virtue after a long and disastrous separation, during which wit had been led astray by profligacy and virtue by fanaticism.” Through the columns first of *Tatler* and then of *Spectator*, Addison educated the middle classes on matters as different as how to hold a fan and the appreciation

23. David Daiches, *A Critical History of English Literature*, Vol. II, p. 590.

of Milton. His experiment "to enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality" was a remarkable success. His good-natured irony showed to his age its follies without hurting its susceptibilities. The fifth number of *Spectator* poked fun at the extravagances and absurdities of Italian opera, then so fashionable in London; in the tenth number he proclaimed his intention of bringing philosophy out of libraries and closets to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and coffee-houses"; in the 125th number he laughs at the folly of political division of the nation into Whigs and Tories; in his *Coverley Papers* he meditated between town and country, between landed gentry and prosperous citizen, in the 249th number of *Spectator* Addison, discussing laughter, wrote: "If the talent of ridicule were employed to laugh men out of vice and folly, it might be of some use to the world"—and his own essays are the best example of educative satire.

From the above account it is clear that the social and political climate of the age encouraged the growth of satire.

(ii) *Separation of the Ideal and the Actual*

A dissatisfaction with the existing conditions and a painful realisation that man is not what he can be and ought to be have been is behind satire in all ages. Basil Willey, in his book, *The Eighteenth Century Background*, quotes the following observation of J. M. Murry, "True satire implies the condemnation of society by reference to an ideal; the satirist is engaged in measuring the monstrous aberration from the ideal."²⁴ The satirist exposes and condemns the object satirised by referring to higher traditional standards. This has been a favourite technique with most satirists. Does not T. S. Eliot bring the ideal and the actual together in sharp juxtaposition to convey his nightmarish vision of the Waste Land, thereby shocking us into a realisation of the debased nature of the actual? Now, conditions in the early 18th century were, as, Basil Willey says, "especially favourable for this satiric kind of measurement." Ruthlessly and dispassionately the writers exposed the sham beliefs and false values of the age. Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* is a brilliant sardonic commentary on the hollow values of an age which mistook the externals for the essence. Consider, for

24. Basil Willey, *The Eighteenth Century Background*, p. 99.

examples, his satire in these lines which put moral disaster and a minor social accident on the same level :

“Whether the nymph shall break Diana’s law,
Or some frail china jar receive a flaw ;
Or stain her honour or her new brocade ;
Forget her pray’s, or miss a masquerade.”

Can anyone miss the irony of these lines :

“Here files of pins extend their shining rows.
Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, Billet-doux.”

Perhaps one of the reasons for this satiric kind of measurement was the widely prevailing interest in the nature of man. The philosophical rationalism of the age delighted to view man as a rational being, capable of knowing the right from the wrong and of moving in the right direction. But ironically enough, this insistence on Reason and Nature served only to make more poignant the realisation that man deviated at every turn from the cherished ideals and that he was no more than a bundle of corrupt desires and devices. Whatever Locke and Descartes might say in praise of man’s rational soul, in actuality he was discovered to be a Yahoo—a depraved, corrupt creature, devoid of reason and good sense. When Swift, in *Gulliver’s Travels*, held up the Yahoos as brutes he was in fact exposing the corrupt men of his own day. Is not Gulliver at pains to communicate his sense of shock when he realised that he very much resembled the creatures he hated so much ? The two quotations given below will illustrate the point :

- (i) And I have reason to believe that they (Yahoos) had some imagination that I was of their own species, which I often assisted myself, by stripping up my sleeves, and showing my naked arms and breast in their sight.....
- (ii) ...Now I could not longer deny that I was a real yahoo in every limb and feature, since the female had a natural propensity to me as one of their own species.

And when Swift describes the yahoos as “cunning, malicious, treacherous and perverse” he is, metaphorically, describing the corrupt humanity of his own days. Swift uses many techniques to suggest the moral decline of man. Much has been said by critics about his excremental imagery and his hard-hitting style. But it must be remembered that if Swift describes the yahoos in a language calculated to cause feelings

of revulsion and hatred in the readers it is not because of a native love of misanthrope : it is precisely because his moral sense compels him to expose the true nature of moral corruption and to secure its condemnation. Images of violence, filth and excrement are used to suggest moral corruption among the yahoos :

“I observed the young animal’s flesh to smell very rank, and the stink was somewhat between a weasel and a fox, but much more disagreeable.”

At another place Gulliver observes :

“By what I could discover, the yahoos appear to be the most unteachable of all animals, their capacities never reaching higher than to draw or carry burthens.”

Ricardo Quintana points out how Swift’s satire was determined by his moral realism—“his insistence upon the inside of things rather than the outside, upon actuality rather than illusion, on the undisguised truth regarding human nature and human situation.”²⁵

Swift’s satires are calculated to “vex the world” and make it aware of higher standards of morality. All through his satires one may discern an insistence on reason as the best guide in life. This reason is more than mere commonsense ; it is a manifestation of the divine spark in man. In *Some Free-Thoughts upon the Present State of Affairs*, he says :

“God hath given the bulk of mankind a capacity to understand reason when it is fairly offered ; and by reason they would easily be governed, if it were left to their choice.”

But Swift disapproves of the disastrous attitude of looking upon reason as an intellectual exercise. In *Gulliver’s Travels* he praises the houyhnhnms, who stand for rational man, for their love of reason and finds that reason among them is not “a problematical point” as it is with men. Whereas men “can argue with plausibility on both sides of a question, thus creating confusion, houyhnhnms’ love of reason is not coloured by passion and self-interest.”

And the presence of houyhnhnms makes us realize how vile the yahoos are in comparison. While the houyhnhnms stand

25. Ricardo Quintana, *Swift : An Introduction*, p. 143.

for good sense and reason, the yahoos represent all that it depraved and corrupt in human nature. After having established the anti-thesis between the houyhnhnms and the yahoos, Swift by a stroke of superb irony makes us realise, when we have read through the book and laughed whole-heartedly at the yahoos, that we too are no better than those half-human creatures. Nothing can be more fitting than this. Awareness of higher specimens of humanity, of higher standards of morality brings into sharp focus the urgent need of improvement of humanity. The real is shown in such a light that it becomes well nigh intolerable.

The satirist is than a person who reveals the incompatibility between the ideal and the actual. In the words of Sutherland "the satirist is nearly always a person who is abnormally sensitive to the gap between what might be and what is. Just as some people feel a sort of compulsion when they see a picture hanging crooked, to walk up to it and straighten it, so the satirist feels driven to draw attention to any departure from what he believes to be truth, or honesty, or justice. He wishes to restore the balance, to correct the error."²⁶

(iii) *Development of a Prose Style*

The development of a new style of writing during the Augustan age was to have far-reaching effects. The critical temper of the age required an effective medium for expressing its dissatisfaction with the existing conditions. The new prose style, which came to perfection in the hands of Addison, Steele, Defoe and Swift, was eminently suited for commenting on human nature and situation. It combined force with simplicity. Its flexibility made it an effective tool for expressing opinions on all subjects. It was simple enough to be understood by common readers, and yet it carried enough thrust and force to disturb people's complacency. Clearly it was best adapted "for a kind of literature which aimed especially at clearness, conciseness and concentrated force." It proved to be the best weapon in the satirist's armoury. Addison used it to comment upon the manners and morals of the age ; Steele lent it a warmth and geniality as he alone could ; Defoe gave it a breadth by using it for his pamphlets and other writings on an astonishingly wide variety of subject ; Swift reinforced it with

powerful imagery and used it for sledge-hammer work. The passages given below will give an idea of the effectiveness of the new style for satirical writing :

- (i) "In the Shops and Warehouses the prentices stand some on one side of the Shop and some on other (having Trade little enough) and there they throw *High Church and Low Church* at one another's Heads like battledoore and shuttlecock." —*Defoe*.
- (ii) "There is scarce any Man in England, of what Denomination soever, that is not a Free-thinker in Politicks, and hath not some particular Notions of his own, by which he distinguishes himself from the rest of the community. Our island, which was formerly called a Nation of Saints may now be called a Nation of Statesmen." —*Addison*.
- (iii) The most accomplished way of using books at present is two-fold ; either, first, to serve them as some men do lords, learn their titles exactly, and then brag of their acquaintance. Or, secondly which is indeed the choicer, the profounder, and politer method, to get a thorough insight into the index, by which the whole book is governed and turned, like fishes by the tail. For to enter the palace of learning at the great gate, requires an expense of time and forms ; therefore men of much haste, and little ceremony, are content to get in by the back door." —*Swift*.
- (iv) It happened this evening, that we fell into a very pleasing walk at a distance from his house. As soon we came into it, "It is," quoth the good old man looking around him with a simple, 'very hard that any part of my land should be settled upon one who has used me so ill as the perverse widow did and yet I am sure I could not see a spring of any bough of this whole walk of trees, but I should reflect upon her and her severity. She has certainly the finest hand of any woman in the world. You are to know, this was the place wherein I used to muse upon her : and by that custom I can never come into it but the same tender sentiments revive in my mind, as if I had actually walked with that beautiful creature under these shades.

—*Steele*.

V. ALLEGORY AND SYMBOLISM IN SATIRE

Allegory is defined by *Encyclopaedia Britannica* as "a figurative representation conveying a meaning other than and in addition to the literal." An allegory is distinguished from a metaphor by being longer sustained and more fully carried out in its details. It is essentially an art of double meaning, one overt and the other hidden. In literature it usually takes the form of a story underneath which is hidden a second significance, mainly didactical or satirical. Thus the story of Una and the Knight in Spenser's *Faerie Queen* has a second and more significant meaning besides its surface meaning. There is an obvious advantage in using allegory when the aim of the writer is primarily moral. While the surface story serves to hold the attention of the reader, the hidden meaning communicates itself to an attentive reader, its force felt all the more for its pictorial representation.

Allegory was a very popular device in the ancient days. The parables of the New Testament are moral allegories, and taking the cue from them the early church fathers made consistent use of allegory in their sermons and writings. It attained unsurpassed popularity during the Middle Ages. Writing in *Medieval English Literature*, W. P. Ker says, "Allegory is often taken to be the proper and characteristic mode of thought in the Middle Ages, and certainly there is no kind of invention which is commoner." Preachers and commentators loved to set forth allegorical interpretations of Scripture. In Literature allegory may be traced as far back as Hesoid and Prodicus.²⁷ The latter, a contemporary of Socrates, is credited with the authorship of *The Choice of Hercules* which has served as a model for many other allegories. It sets forth the timeless war between the forces of good and the forces of evil, and man's vacillations between the two. The two ladies who confront Hercules are Virtue and Vice; the former is modest-looking and the latter tempting and outwardly attractive. Hercules listens to both of them, but decides to take Virtue for his companion, thus representing the universal theme of the triumph of the good over the evil, a theme which will be repeated by Spenser, Bunyan and many others. In Prodicus

27. J. A. K. Thomson, *Classical Influences on English Prose*
p. 18.

allegory is simple and artless. Lucian's *Dream* is also an allegory.

Coming to English literature, we find the earliest use of the allegory in the Anglo-Saxon religious writings. They are written in the best tradition of the medieval moral allegories. Morality plays made allegorical interpretation of Scripture popular. The tradition was carried on by Langland and Spenser. Langland's *Piers the Plowman*, written in the fourteenth century, is a powerful moral allegory meant to denounce the several corrupt practices prevailing among the clergies then and to bring the people back to the path of godly life. Incidentally, Langland is perhaps the first English writer to combine satire and allegory to such good purpose. He digresses in the *Prologue* to introduce the allegory of rats wishing to bell the cat, in order to hit at the burgesses and influential men of the time who were working against the king. Spenser's *Faerie Queen* is an extended exercise in highly elaborate and well sustained allegory. The multiplicity of meanings and interpretations is at time confusing, but in no way does it obstruct the communication of thought. It adequately fulfils the purpose for which it was written, namely to fashion a gentle man in virtue. Una and the Knight of the Cross stand for Truth and Holiness respectively, while Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) is an allegory of the soul's progress through this world of temptations and pitfalls to attainment of grace. Its hero Christian is Everyman who must jealously guard his soul against all weaknesses and temptations. His journey to the Celestial City is beset with many difficulties: he has to pass through Vanity Fair, is captured by Giant Despair and imprisoned in Doubting Castle, and flounders in the Slough of Despond, but in the end he succeeds in reaching Celestial City. Swift was another writer who knew well the art of allegory. Addison also used allegory in some of his essays like *Choice of Hercules* and *The vision of Mirza*. The author is led up to a high place by Mirza and from there he sees 'the vale of misery' down below, surrounded by 'the tide of water,' which is explained as 'that portion of eternity called time, and finally he sees a bridge the significance of which Mirza explains as under:

"The bridge thou seest, said he, is human life; consider it attentively. Upon a more leisurely survey of it, I found that it consisted of threescore and ten

arches, with several broken arches, which, added to those that were entire, made up the number about an hundred.....As I looked more attentively, I saw several of passengers dropping through the bridge, into the great tide that flowed underneath it ; and upon further examination, perceived there were innumerable trapdoors that lay concealed in the bridge, which the passengers no sonner trod upon, but they fell through them into the tide and immediately disappeared."

After the Augustan age, the art of allegory fell more or less into disuse. Though here and there one may find examples of allegorical writing, but in the main it ceased to be the much admired device that it was in the past. Shelley's *Triumph of Life* is an allegorical poem and so are Keats' *Endymion and Hyperion : A Vision*. In our own days George Orwell has made brilliant use of the allegory. His satire *Animal Farm* attracted considerable attention when it was published and it continues to hold interest for lay and critical readers alike. It reminds one of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.

MORAL PURPOSE OF ALLEGORY

An allegory is always actuated by some moral purpose. While an undisguised and pure sermon may not find much favour with the readers, on the contrary its directness may scur them away, a pictorial representation of it will appeal to the imagination and at the same time bring home to readers the necessity of veering away from the path of evil to that of right and truth. An allegory is a powerful weapon in the hands of a satirist like Swift or Langland. When reinforced by powerful imagery and incisive language it can be devastating in its effect. A reading of *A Tale of a Tub* or *Gulliver's Travels* will convince one of the truth of his observation.

VI. SWIFT'S USE OF ALLEGORY

To suit the purpose of his satire Swift used allegory, sometimes intermittently as in *The Battle of the Books*, sometimes consistently as in *A Tale of a Tub*, and sometimes with not so well defined aims as in *Gulliver's Travels*. It must be remembered that he never wrote allegory for the sake of allegory, but primarily to make his satire universal and mere effective.

In *The Battle of the Books* the allegory is used brilliantly in the episode of the spider and the bee. '...upon the highest Corner of a large Window, there dwelt a certain *Spider* swollen up to

the first Magnitude, by the Destruction of infinite Numbers of *Flies*, whose spoils lay scattered before the Gates of his Palace, like human Bones before the Cave of some Giant.' As it happens, a bee gets into the web, but manages to escape from it unharmed, though in the process the web is broken. The spider issues forth from the centre of the broken web and sees the bee, who "is cleansing his wings and disengaging them from the ragged remnants of the cobweb." The infuriated spider pours scorn on the bee and accuses him of living on plunder, to which charge the bee replies fittingly. While the bee visits flowers and gardens to collect honey and "whatever I collect thence enriches myself, without the least injury to their beauty, their smell, or their taste," the spider's web is no more than a 'store of dirt' enriched by 'sweepings exhaled from below.' In short the question is :

"Whether is the nobler being of the two, that which by a lazy contemplation of four inches round, by an overweening pride feeding and engendering on itself turns all into excrement and venom, producing nothing at all, but flybane and a cobweb ; or that which by an universal range, with long search, must study, true judgement, and distinction of things, bring home honey and wax."

The conclusion is self-evident. And when we remember that the spider stands allegorically for the moderns and the bee for the ancients, we may realise how well Swift struck at the moderns in defence of his patron, who had publicly expressed his high opinion of the ancients.

A Tale of A Tub employs allegory more consistently. Here Swift's theme is religion. In his *Apology* Swift gave the reasons for penning *The Tale*. "The author," he wrote, "thought the numerous and gross corruptions in Religion and Learning might furnish Matter for a Satyr (satire) that would be useful and diverting....." In this book Swift wanted to defend the Church of England as the *via media* and to attack Roman Catholicism and Puritan Dissent. So in *The Tub* we have the story of three brothers, Peter, Martin and Jack, standing for Roman Catholicism, Church of England and Puritan Dissent respectively. To each of the three a coat is given by their dying father which, they are told, will last for ever and will need no alteration. The three brothers grow up and when

they find that the utter simplicity of their coats is ridiculed by onlookers they set about the task of adding ornaments to it. With devastating irony Swift employs the sartorial image. The tailor, who can add any number of ornaments on to a dress, is raised to the level of a deity and universe itself is no more than a large suit of clothes. And what is man? He is "but a *Micro-coat*, or rather a complete Suit of Cloathes with all its Trimmings." While Peter spoils his coat with all sorts of adornments and grows more and more insolent, Martin and Jack repent their folly, consult the true will of their father, and set about stripping their coats of all false trimmings. Jack, in the rush of enthusiasm, acts violently and so damages his own coat ; Martin on the other hand, is careful that the coat should not be torn in the process of discarding the trimmings. And so Swift establishes Martin or Church of England as representing true religion. There are other allegorical episodes also woven in the plot of *the Tub* and they all strengthen the argument that in matters of religion and learning man should not be guided by fancy, but by Reason.

Gulliver's Travels

Gulliver's Travels is Swift's most stinging satire on human depravities. The Dean is on record as having written in one of his letters to his friend Pope, "I hate and detest that animal called man." and *the Travels* is a living embodiment of his misanthropic vision. Louis A. Landa calls it "an exploration of man's social and moral nature in non-theological terms, done in the allegorical mode and embedded in fantasy." The book is about Gulliver's voyages to fantastic places. The first two voyages to Lilliput and Brobdingnag, provide Swift an opportunity to reflect, allegorically, on the political conditions of the time as also on human nature in general. Critics have identified Flimnap with Sir Robert Walpole, whom Swift disliked both as a man and a politician, while Gulliver may be taken to stand, in the political allegory, as a composite figure combining the good qualities of Swift, Harley, and Bolingbroke. Swift satirises the quarrels between the political and religious factions of his time by providing a highly interesting account of the Lilliputian parties, the Big-Endians and the Little-Endians. To strip the account of allegory, the Big-Endians stand for Catholics and the Little Endians for Protestants. The reference to the Test Act is quite obvious in the following passage :

“Whereupon the Emperor his father published an edict, commanding all his subjects, upon great penalties, to break the smaller end of their eggs.....It is computed that eleven thousand persons have, at several times, suffered death, rather than submit to break their eggs at the smaller end. Many hundred large volumes have been published upon this controversy : but the books of the Big-Endians have been long forbidden, and the whole party rendered incapable by law of holding employments.”

Tories and Whigs are allegorised as Tramecksan and Slamecksan. It will not be difficult to find allusions to the War of Spanish Succession. The moral allegory of Book I and II is neatly summed up by David Daiches in these words : “Swift’s object in Book I is to deflate human pride by showing all the pomp and circumstance of human pretension, all the stylization of cruelty, the vanities, rituals, political catchwords, meaningless controversies, that characterize man in society, existing in a community of minute creatures and so appearing as wholly contemptible. Conversely, when Swift places his hero among giants and makes him, now himself a tiny creature, boast about the way his civilization works to contemptuously amused grown-ups, they can only react to his absurd boastings with the crushing comment that Gulliver’s people must be “the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth”.....The enormous size of the Brobdingnagians, who are observed with minute closeness by Gulliver as he is handled by them, enables Swift to vent his disgust with the flesh, with man as a physical animal who sweats and excretes.”²⁸

In Book III Swift describes Gulliver’s voyage to Laputa where live a race of mortal ‘singular in their shapes, habits, and countenances.’ The Laputans are immensely interested in mathematics and music, and not only their outer garments are adorned with “figures of suns, moons, stars” and those of “fiddles, flutes, harps, trumpets, guitars, harpsichord and many more instruments of music” but amusingly enough, even food items conform to mathematical or musical patterns :

28. David Daiches, *A Critical History of English Literature*, p. 612.

"In the first course there was a shoulder of mutton, cut into an equilateral triangle, a piece beef into a rhomboides, and a pudding into a cycloid. The second course was two ducks, trussed up into the form of fiddles ; sausages and puddings resembling flutes and hautboys, and a breast of veal in the shape of a harp. The servants cut our bread into cones, cylinders, parallelograms, and several other mathematical figures."

What Swift is doing here ? He is poking fun at the scientists and inventors of his own age who showed unsurpassed enthusiasm for abstract science and the theory of music. It is impractical scholarship and vain philosophy that the Dean seeks to demolish and ridicule, and he does so more effectively than any other satirist. His highly comical description of the methods of the professors of the Academy is worth quoting, to make one realise the power of his satire :

"A new method of teaching was for a preposition and demonstration to be fairly written on a thin wafer, with ink composed of a cephalic tincture. This the student was to swallow upon a fasting stomach, and for three days eat nothing but bread and water. As the water digested, the tincture mounted to his brain, bearing the proposition along with it,"

The allegory in Book IV has posed serious problems for scholars and critics. Here Swift's satire is at its most devastating. Coupled with his destructive satire in his pessimism and misanthropic vision, and the result is, that besides the gloomy world of the Book IV many scholars find Schopenhauer much more cheerful. Book IV describes Gulliver's journey to the Houyhnhnms-land where he meets to strange species—the Houyhnhnms and the yahoos. The former are horses who live in conformity with the laws of "reason and nature." while the yahoos are depraved brutes in the shape of man. The yahoos are vile and ugly, unteachable and unreformable, insensitive to reason and goodness, and live a detestable life. They are associated with all that is filthy and loathsome in human nature. This cynical vision of man has come as a shock to many readers. Is man really as mean and vile as Swift would have us believe ? Some critics have opined that the Fourth Voyage grew out of Swift's malignity, personal bitterness, or madness. Perhaps it would be more nearer truth to say

that Swift, swept by his intense anger at human depravities and failings, over-reached himself and intentionally portrayed the yahoos as utter brutes in order to set off by comparison the beauty of the rational life of the houyhnhnms who are set up as a model for man.

VII. SWIFT'S USE OF SYMBOLISM

Besides using extended allegory, Swift has also used symbols in his satire to realise his satiric aim. Images of excretion are used to suggest moral corruption. When Swift speaks of the filth and ugliness surrounding the life of the yahoos, he is, symbolically, exposing their moral depravity and meanness. Sartorial images that dominate *A Tale of a Tub* symbolise the irrational. It must be a mad world where the fashion of the tailor is raised to a divine level and man is reduced to objects. In the Tubbian world he is no better than a "Micro-coat," or rather a complete suit of clothes with all its trimmings. Viewed in this context, all adornments are seen as images of pretence. Swift was also at pains to attack all forms of unreason, since he stood for a life governed by divine reason. Therefore, in his satire, images of disorder or perverted order symbolise unreason. Consider, for example, the image of the chicken with its head cut off in *A Tale of a Tub*.

Thus Swift made effective and adequate use of the art of allegory and of symbolism in conveying his satiric vision of a world pretending to be rational and sane but really hollow and irrational.

CHAPTER III

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH PROSE STYLE FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES TO THE PRESENT DAY

In all civilizations the first medium of communication among people was poetry, prose came much later in history. Perhaps its association with music and the ease with which it could be remembered and passed on, orally, from generation to generation, made poetry a natural choice. Little surprise, therefore, that before the Renaissance, and even two centuries after this historic event, poetry should have dominated the literary scene.

I. GROWTH OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

The growth and development of English prose was an extremely slow process ; the reasons for this are not far to seek. In the early times Latin was the language of Christianity, and so of the scholars and noblemen. One aspiring to fame and name and to be heard by the upper sections of society naturally wrote in Latin, English being looked down upon as an inferior language until as late as the fourteenth century. To refresh our memory, Tyndall was pronounced a heretic and burnt at stake for showing the audacity to bring out an English translation of the Bible in 1525. Thomas more wrote his *Utopia* in Latin. And even Bacon, whose fame now rests on essays, written in English, held the language of the land in contempt and, as late as 1620, wrote his *magnum opus Navum Organum* in Latin. He is reported to have remarked on the untenable position of English, vis-a-vis Latin, holding that "these modern languages will at one time play the bankrupt with books." Therefore all the more praise to those souls who championed the cause of English and had courage of their conviction to use it for literary purposes. And history has vindicated them. Today, while Latin has become an out-of-fashion language, concern primarily of researchers and academicians, English has amply demonstrated its native strength and viability in rising from its original inferior position to its present international status.

English prose, even in its rudimentary form, did not appear on the literary scene until before the end of the ninth century when King Alfred sternly set his face against Latin and made determined attempt to establish the native vernacular. Himself a great scholar, King Alfred translated many books into English and was the main inspiration behind the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, the first literary book in English prose.

(i) *Early Prose*

In the pre-Renaissance period, Wycliff, that rebel Lollard, took a big step forward towards the making of English prose, by writing his tracts and sermons in it. He also wrote an English translation of the Bible, though it could not be printed due to the opposition of the Church and had to be circulated in manuscript form. His writings clearly show the possibilities of the language. In the age of Chaucer some romantic stories were written in prose though poetry still continued to be the supreme vehicle of creative activity. Chaucer's own efforts at prose-story are less satisfying than his experiments in verse-tales. *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, published anonymously, show a better adaptation of the art of story-telling. Its style is dominated by co ordinate sentences.

By far the most important writer of the pre-Renaissance era is Thomas Malory. His *Morte d' Arthur* is a collection of stories about King Arthur and his valiant knights. A conscious artist, Malory is at pains to tell his stories in an engaging manner. His style is happily free of complex constructions. Generally the sentences are loosely strung together by 'then' and 'and.' Here is a sample of his prose :

"So within six weeks after Sir Launcelot fell sick, and lay in bed ; and then he sent for the bishop that there was, hermit, and all his true fellows. Then Sir Launcelot said with dreary steven : "Sir Bishop I pray you that ye will give me all my rights that belongeth unto a Christian man." "It shall not need you." said the hermit and all his fellows, "it is but a heaviness of the blood, ye shall be well amended by the grace of God tomorrow."

What strikes one in the style of Malory is its unadorned simplicity, its homely vigour, its conciseness and rigid economy of language.

II. THE ELIZABETHAN PROSE

The revival of interest in classical writers brought about a change in the intellectual climate of the Elizabethan age and its literature ; it affected not only the content but the spirit and methods of prose. The English writers fell under the influence of the rhetorical style of Cicero and Isocrates and sought to reproduce the admired effects in their own language. Consequently, English prose of the Elizabethan age is self-conscious. It moves away from the rhythm and idiom of common speech. It is artificial, studded, and studded with figures of speech. The aim of Lyly and Sydney, of Nashe and Burton, was to capture the grace and formal elegance and patterned beauty of the style of Cicero. Lyly developed a highly elaborate style which was termed 'euphistic' ; Sydney's contribution was Arcadian style ; Nashe and Burton developed a style heavy with nouns, verbs, and phrases. 'It was characteristic of the Elizabethans,' says Alan Warner, 'to take things to extremes. They were given to flamboyance and exaggeration in their writing..... They would not have approved of George Orwell's : "If it is possible to cut out a word, but it out. On the contrary, they often seem to toying to get in as many words as they can."²⁹

(l) *Euphistic Style*

Johan Lyle (1554-1606) created a new vogue in prose style. He was the first writer "who consciously and persistently used an artistic style, and whose chief inspiration manifestly was to say a thing well."³⁰ In his book, *Euphues*, published in 1578, he used a highly patterned artificial style which depended for its effect upon a balancing of clauses in antithesis the contrast being pointed by alliteration. For example, "Although I have *shrined* thee in my heart for a *trusty friend*, I will *shunne* thee hereafter as a *trothless foe*." The conscious and deliberate symmetry of the sentence is all too apparent. It may be pointed out here that the Medieval Latin writers were fond of using antithesis, balance, and alliteration, and Lyly, in his desire to make his prose appear artistic, not only borrowed their qualities but added to them the use of profuse similes and metaphors. The over-all effect is the creation of a prose that comes very

29. Alan Warner, *A Short Guide to English Style*, p. 83.

[ELBS ed.]

30. Emile Leguio, *A History of English Literature*, p. 167.

near to poetry in its measured and regulated effects. Phrases like "The hot liver of a heedless lover," "of more wit than wealth, and yet of more wealth than wisdom" can become across in every page, every paragraph, perhaps in every line. Given below is a passage which illustrates all the characteristics of Llyl's euphistic style :

"There dwelt in Athens a young gentleman of great patrimony..... This gallant, of more wit than wealth, and yet of more wealth than wisdom, seeing himself inferior to none in pleasant conceits, thought himself superior to all honest conditions, insomuch that he deemed himself so apt to all things, that he gave himself almost to nothing....."

Note here the fine balancing of "of more wit than wealth" by "more wealth than wisdom," "of inferior to none" by "thought himself superior to all." The device of alliteration is obvious. And also notice the use of parallelism and profusion of similes and images in the following passage :

"As therefore the sweetest rose hath his prickle, the finest velvet his brack, the fairest flour his bran, so the sharpest wit hath his wanton will, and the holiest head his wicked way. And true it is ihat some men write and most men believe, in all perfect shapes, a blemish bringeth rather a liking every way to the eyes, than a loathing and way to the mind. Venus had her mole in her cheek which made her more amiable : Helen her scar on her chin which Parish called *cos amoris*, the whetstone of love,"

Artificial and studded as the euphistic style was, it had its significance at the time. As Emile Legiuos says, "the innovation it represented was of service at a time when therc was need to cast the formless in a mould, to impart art to the inartistic." The euphistic style was a craze during the years 1580-1590, but it was too monotonous and artificial to last long. It was discarded and laughed at even in the Elizabethan age itself. Shakespeare had his dig when he parodied the style in *Henry IV*.

(ii) *Arcadian Style*

When Philip Sidney, who is often refered to as the finest specimen of the renaissance ideal of a gentleman. undertook to write a book, *Arcadia* to please his sister, he used a prose as

ornate and extravagant as Llyl's. Sidney had an insatiable love of the beautiful, and in his book he refines upon both thought and language. To the artifices of the euphistic style he added the pastoral and chivalric conventions. That is how he describes the beauty of Pamela : "Then (I say) indeed methought the lilies grew pale for envy, the roses methought blushed to see sweeter roses in her cheeks, and the apples methought fell down from the trees to do homage to the apples of her breast." In Sidney too one notices the use of antithesis, verbal conceits, and poetic phrases. But what strikes us most is his prodigality of ornament and metaphors. He uses metaphors to create vivid images. When a lady is in woe, Sidney would describe her condition by speaking of "her eyes wherein sorrow swam." When the ladies undress they are described as "getting the pure silver of their bodies out of the ore of their garments."

Sidney's prose will be remembered for over-refinement of feelings and thoughts. It is perhaps his renaissance temper trying to attain to the exquisite in every thing. If two brothers are dying of their wounds, Sidney brings out their love for each other by saying that each was "more dying in the other than in himself."

The prose of Sidney is hardly suitable for writing about the common-day world, but its contribution was that it exploited the full resources of the language. The influence of Sidney was to last for a long time. Other writers would copy and imitate the refinement and poetic quality of his prose and so delay the emergence of the plain prose.

(iii) Other Eliyzabethan Writers

The influence of Llyl and of Sidney caused other Elizabethan writers to write a highly elaborate and extravagant prose far removed from common speech. Thomas Lodge (1558-1625), whose chief prose work is his romance, *Rosalynde*, derived both from Llyl and Sidney. The romance employs a pastoral setting like Sidney's *Arcadia* and is known for its charming songs and sentimental dialogues. His friend, Robert Green (1560-92), modelled his style after Llyl's. After writing a number of euphistic romances, he turned his attention to the London underworld and used a simpler, perhaps more vivid, prose in giving a realistic portrait of the disreputable streets. His *Life and Death of Ned Brown* anticipates Defoe

and Smollett. To Thoms Nash (1567-1600) goes the credit of creating not only a new genre, the picaresque novel, but also a new style. By contrast with Llyl's, his style is vigorous, swift and adequate to his satiric purpose. It is tinged with mocking irony which made him so unpalatable to the Government of the day and to the many who were the objects of his sharp even if coarse satire. Sometimes his style exhibits a blend of the grotesque and the lyrical as in *The Unfortunate Traveller*. One may not agree with Russel Lowell's suggestion to call Nash as the Rabelais of English literature, but his remarks certainly draw attention to his remarkable power as a satirist. His works also show an ability to seize upon physical beauty and idiosyncracy.

When we survey the prose style of the writers of the early years of the seventeenth century we find the same tendency to write in a hyperbolic and exaggerated manner that we find in the Elizabethans. But when this exuberance was channelised for the description of Plague-scarred London, the result was a prose lurid in details, macabre in effects, hyperbolic in character. Such was the prose which Thomas Dekker (1570 ?-1632) wrote. At times the excess of the rhetoric casts doubt on the sincerity of the writer and reduces the whole piece to an exercise in parody. Horror is accumulated upon horror. The pavement is littered with "blasted Rosemary, withered Hyacinth, fatal Cypress and Yew" and "heaps of dead men's bones." Or consider this line "the loud groans of raving sick men ; the struggling pangs of souls departing : in every house grief striking up an alarm ; servants crying out for masters: wives for husbands. parents for children....." Set against this, the description of London plague by Defoe appears to gain strength and realism by virtue of its plain English

Among the educationsts who contributed to the prose of the period the name of Roger Ascham (1515-68) stands foremost. Being a scholar, his style was naturally influenced by classical writers ; hence its Latin turns of Phrase and Latin elegancies. Like the euphists, he made use of well-balanced antithetical sentences. He made a sincere effort to achieve balance between the native and borrowed elements. His prose gained enormously from submitting to the discipline of the ancients.

There is one writer who stands aloof from all other—the serene and majestic Richard Hooker (1554-1600). Free from

vulgarity and pedantry, his prose is clothed on in resplendant splendour and dignity. Though based on Latin construction his style is not latinised as is Roger Ascham's. It is lucid and harmonious, dignified enough for serious writing, logical enough to carry an argument affectively. He has a sustained dignity and eloquence that one finds in Milton.

III. LATE RENAISSANCE

The spirit and influence of the renaissance continued even in the early years of the seventeenth century ; we have therefore thought it appropriate to discuss the outstanding writers of the first quarter as the products of the late renaissance. Their style has affinities with that of the early renaissance writers, and in spirit they belong to the Elizabethan age.

(i) *Bacon and the Aphoristic Style*

In point of style, Francis Bacon (1561-1626) is poles apart from Llyl or Sidney or Hooker. He who once thought it below his dignity to pen his highest thoughts in native language, was, ironically enough, the very person who did pioneer work in the task of creating a simpler English. His *Essays* exhibit two styles. The essays written earlier in point of date are remarkable for their terse, highly compressed, aphoristic style. The language appear to be weighed down with thought. Some of his cryptic remarks and aphorisms have passed into common use. Here are some examples :

Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability (*Of Studies*).

Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider. (*Of Studies*).

Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested (*Of Studies*).

A crowd is not company, and faces are but a gallery of pictures. (*Of Friendship*).

He that hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune ; for they are impediments to great enterprise, either of virtue or mischief. (*Of Marriage and Single Life*).

Sentences are short, crisp, sententious. One wonders if thought can be compressed still further. Therefore we sometimes refer to Bacon's style as aphoristic,

But the later Bacon uses a more colourful style. It is enriched with similes, metaphors and poetic images. "Virtue," we are told, "is like precious odours, most fragrant when they are incensed or crushed ; for prosperity doth best discover vice, but adversity doth best discover virtue." Or take this sentence : "A great estate left to an heir, is as lure of all the birds of prey round about to seize on him, if he be not the better established in years and in judgment." Sometimes the whole thought is illuminated by a judicious use of highly evocative image. "Beauty is like a rich stone, best plain set." The new style of Bacon is flexible enough to describe the common and the familiar equally well, Hitherto the English used by writers was essentially poetic and eloquent, hardly fit for describing or reflecting on things as common as buildings and plantations and gardens. To Bacon goes the credit of forging a pliable language.

(ii) *Periodic Style—Burton, Jeremy Taylor & Browne*

Though vastly different in their temperaments, Robert Burton (1577-1640), Jeremy Taylor (1613-67) and Thomas Browne (1605-82) commonly used the period type of sentence in penning their thoughts. While in a style using loosely hung sentences, the meaning is communicated to the reader as he reads along ; in the period type of sentence the meaning is not complete until the end is reached. Commenting on the periodic style Alar Warner says, "The reader is taken along certain steps in the writer's thought but, he does not know in what direction he is going until he reaches the end. The effect may be one of suspense, finally rounded off by a climax."³¹ Though a periodic sentence need not be long, but in practice, it is usually found to be long-winding and full of parentheses.

Robert Burton as a prose writer will be remembered for his *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, a quaint work truly representative of the eccentric temperament of its author. He is generally discursive and witty, at times terse and pithy but never vague. He loves to use words for their own sake. Phrases follow phrases, synonyms are heaped together, and all the resources of vocabulary are exhausted to describe a single object. He also displays a love of quotations and of anecdotes. Commenting on his own manner of writing, Burton said that it was like river, "at times swift and precipitate, then dull and slow ; now deep

31. Alan Warner, *A Short Guide to English Style*, p. 100.

then shallow ; now broad, then narrow." Truly, his style has a quaintness about it and reminds one of Charles Lamb.

Jeremy Taylor wrote a highly impassioned poetic prose. His treatises on religious matters are distinguished less by logic than by imagination—"an imagination fed by copious reading and by an excessively classical culture on which he constantly drew, and animated by his charmed contemplation of nature." The stately rhetoric of his works, their richness of colouring and impassioned tone leave a permanent impress on reader's imagination. Says Eirian James on his style : "The music of his prose varies from simplicity to rich audacity, with metaphors and similes elaborated to the furthest degree of imagination. Combined with this is a power of precise description and poetic vision which has won him the name of 'Shakespeare of Divines.' Here is a passage to illustrate his style. As in other periodic sentences, the meaning becomes clear only when we have finished the sentence. The writer sees a rose flower and it starts a train of thoughts in his mind :

"But so have I seen a rose newly springing from the clefts of its hood, and at first it was fair as the morning, and full with the dew of heaven, as a lamb's fleece ; but when a ruder breath had forced open its virgin modest, and dismantled its too youthful and unripe retirements. it began to put on darkness, and to decline to softness, and the symptoms of a sickly age ; it bowed the head, and broke its stalk, and at night having lost soms of its leaves, and all its beauty, it fell into the portion of weeds and outworn faces : The same is the portion of every man, and every woman..."

Ever since his 'discovery' by Lamb and the romantics, Thomas Browne has been universally admired for the deep music and sustained eloquence of his prose. A great humanist, Browne enriches his vocabulary with Latin words used chiefly for their evocative effects. His classical culture is revealed in his rich allusiveness. At its best, the solemnity and grandeur of his style is hardly matched anywhere else in English literature : "his purple patches," when they choose to occur, have a sublimity which even Milton cannot surpass. "The music of his periods is deep, stately, and long-drawn, like that of a funeral march or the full-stop of a cathedral organ." His well-

known prose works are *Religio Medici* and *The Urn Burial*. Here is a passage from the *Urn Burial* :

“To subsist in lasting monuments, to live in their productions, to exist in their names and predicaments of chimeras, was large satisfaction unto old expectations, and made one part of their Elysiums. But all this is nothing in the metaphysics of true belief. To live indeed is to be again ourselves, which being not only an hope but an evidence in noble believers, ‘tis all one to lie in St. Innocent’s Church-yard, as in the sands of Egypt. Ready to be anything, in the ecstasy of being ever. and as content with six foot as the *moles* of Adrianus.”

(iii) *Milton and the General Style*

With Milton the rhetorical, poetic prose reaches its apex. His style is farthest removed from the movement of common speech. The poet in him lends a vehemence to the tone of his prose and also adorns it with highly emotionally charged similes and images. And the grand manner of writing is equally matched by his lofty thought : the outcome is a prose of incandescent beauty, always soaring high on the wings of poetic imagination and capable of alleviating whatever it touches, and rising to sublime heights in purple patches. Though a fit instrument in the hands of a great soul like Milton, his style is likely to degenerate into mock-heroic in the hand of a writer of lesser abilities. We are giving below a passage from *Aeropagitica* in which he visualises England shedding its lethargy and rising again as a powerful nation.

Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks. Methinks I see her as an eagle mewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam.

IV. THE GROWTH OF PLAIN ENGLISH

(i) *Influences*

(a) Even when Milton, Hooker, Taylor, and Browne were expressing themselves in sonorous, eloquent English the need of a plain, simple English, nearer to the movement of common speech, was beginning to be felt. The exuberance of the

renaissance had given place to a critical observation of things which demanded a new style, flexible but adequate, to express it. Observe White Wallerstein and Quintana : "If the great stylistic achievement of the sixteenth century is the full revelation of the possibilities of English verse, and the development of a variety of verse patterns to meet the needs of the most brilliant and fecund period in the history of English poetry, than that of the seventeenth century is the much more laborious, much less dramatic and much more difficult achievement of a widely adequate and satisfying but manageable prose style, adaptable to a multiplicity of purpose and suitable for a variety of reasons."³² Many factors were responsible for this change of attitude towards prose style. Firstly, there was a general desire to give up the oratorical style of Cicero—the *genus grande*—in favour of a *genus humile*, the style suited to essay-writing. Continental writers like Marc-Antoine Muret and Montaign had already started writing in a style that did not aspire after rhetorical effects of Cicero. At home, Bacon heralded the break from the old ornate prose style. He said that style must deliver the knowledge, and so it must be lucid and appropriate to the subject.

(b) Secondly, the influence of the Royal Society also helped the evolution of simple prose style. Its members wanted a clear and natural prose capable of communicating ideas effectively and adequately. They preferred the common, everyday language to that of scholars. "The Royal Society," declared the Bishop of Rochester, "have exacted from all their members a close, marked, natural way of speaking : positive expressions, clear sense, a native easiness, bringing all things as near the mathematical plainness as they can." That is to say the emphasis was now on the use of plain, clear, direct English fitted to the nature of truth it was designed to communicate. The strong feeling against the excesses of oratorical prose is reflected in one of the statutes of the Society which reads as follows :

In all Reports of Experiments to be brought into the society, the matter of fact shall be barely stated without any prefaces, apologies, or rhetorical flourishes, and entered so in the Register book, by order of the

Society.”³³

(c) Another influence was that of the Authorised Version of the Bible, published in 1611. The Authorised Version is, by common consensus, held as the greatest work of English prose, and many writers' style and vocabulary show its influence. Herbert Read calls it ‘the greatest single influence on the development of English prose style.’ It is written in a language which discards all ornament and affectation and seeks to capture feelings and profound thought in simple, concrete language. When the Psalmist wants to describe the troubled condition of those who journey across a stormy sea he does so in a language at once simple and vivid :

“They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths : their soul is melted because trouble. They reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end.

There is unmistakable evidence that the translators of the Authorised Version had a sensitive ear for the rhythm of the native idiom of English. It is difficult to over-emphasise the formative influence of the Bible. Says Eirian James, “Within the compass of one book a wealth of legends, myths, stories, poetry, wisdom and mysticism, was made available in the native tongue and thereby enriched the imagination of the whole people. Since 1611, passages from the Bible have been read aloud in all Church service until its phrases have entered everyday speech to such an extent that it is with a shock of surprise that they are rediscovered in their original content. Through the ear their cadences and rhythms have been deeply and often unconsciously absorbed, and reappear in later prose, notably in religious and mystic writings.....”

(ii) *The Beginning—John Dryden and John Bunyan*

The influence of the Authorised Version is all too apparent when we turn to John Bunyan (1628-1688). His prose is free from the rhetorical devices of Llyl or Sidney, or the impassioned vehemence of Taylor or Milton ; it is simple, direct and near to common speech. Though here and there one may find the Elizabethan tendency to heap up words, yet on the whole his

33. R. F. Jones, Science and Prose Style in the Third Quarter of the Seventeenth Century (Reproduced in Essential Articles : *English Augustan Background*, p. 73).

sentences are short and lucid and have a vividness which make the narrative of *Pilgrim's Progress* so convincing and racy.

John Dryden (1631-1700) is regarded by most critics as the father of English prose, since he was the first to evolve and use "a prose which is adapted to the everyday needs of expression, and yet has dignity enough to rise to any point short of the topmost peaks of eloquence." Its characteristics are clarity and ease. It seems to flow on without any effort. And since Dryden used prose mostly for critical writings he is careful to see that ideas do not get bogged down in literary artifices but emerge with clarity. In other words, language is now recognised as a tool for communication of ideas and not as an art in itself. Another great achievement of Dryden was dispensing with sentences of great and unequal length used by Milton and Taylor and adoption of the modern sentence as a unit of expression. Hugh Walker sums up the principles underlying the prose style of Dryden in these words : "The first business of prose was to convey a plain meaning unmistakably and this was best done by a style based upon that of conversation, yet differing from it as the permanent will differ from the temporary and the studies from the spontaneous."³⁴ Though it is difficult to choose a single passage which can illustrate all the qualities of Dryden's style, yet, we hope, the passage quoted below will give a fair idea of the flowing ease, directness and lucidity of his prose. The passage is from *An Essay of Dramatick Poesy* :

"To begin, then, with Shakespeare. He was the man who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of nature were still present to him, and he drew them not laboriously but luckily : when he describes any thing, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation : he was naturally learned ; he needed not the spectacle of Books to read nature ; he looked inwards, and found her there."

V. THE AUGUSTAN AGE AND THE FLOWERING OF THE ENGLISH PROSE

By the time we reach the end of the seventeenth century a

34. Hugh Walker, *The English Essay and Essayists*, p. 98.

plain and natural style had become normal in English writing. The tradition was continued in the eighteenth century by Defoe, Swift, Steele and Addison. The age being one of critical observation of morals and manners, the prose writers developed an incisive and elegant style to indict the shortcomings of the age and to teach it the ideals of good sense and reason. Prose now becomes a tool of social utility and is widely read and written.

Daniel Defoe (1661-1731) used prose for realistic description of London and of the countryside. His style has the power to produce a perfect illusion of reality, largely because he eschews all literary effects that may falsify the account. He strengthens the impression of verisimilitude by amassing circumstantial details, all lucidly given and set down in a language remarkable for its simplicity and directness. When Dekker writes of the London plague, his account is lurid and inflated, but when Defoe does it, it is realistic and vivid :

“Here I saw a poor man walking on the bank, or sea-wall, as they call it, by himself. I walked a while also about, seeing the houses all shut up ; at last I fell into some talk, at a distance, with this poor man ; first I asked him how people did thereabouts.

“Alas, sir ! says he, ‘almost all desolate ; all dead or sick. Here are very few families in this part, or in that village,’ pointing at Popular, ‘where half of them are not dead already, and the rest sick.’”

Turning to Joseph Addison (1671-1719), we become conscious of the popularity and perfection which the English Prose has achieved by that time. In the hands of Addison it acquires an ease which makes it a perfect channel of communication between the writer and his reader. The familiar tone makes one feel as if one is engaged in friendly conversation with a man rich with observation and eager to offer good advice. The biting satire of Swift may scare many readers away ; but the ease and familiarity of tone of Addison’s essays entice the reader not only into reading them but also sharing the views of the writer. Langland’s satire on lawyers in *Piers the Plowman* is touched with sarcasm and anger, but Addison’s is genial and touched with delicious irony. In *Opera Lions* he gives a playful account of two persons who appear as lions on the stage, fight there, and are friends again after the performance. “But then,” points out Addison, “this

is what is practised everyday in Westminster Hall, where nothing is more usual than to see a couple of lawyers, who have been tearing each other to pieces in the court, embracing one another as soon as they are out of it." The characteristic virtues of Addison's style are lucidity, ease, playful humour and elegance. His irony wherever it appears is not savage like that of Swift : it is playful genial. One has only to turn to his account of Sir Roger's eccentricity (*Sir Roger at Church*) to realise the essayist's ability to blend irony and humour. Or one may equally profitably read his account of *Mischiefs of Party Spirit*.

Addison's prose style is often considered as the best specimen of the 'middle style.' No one would possibly dispute this claim. But for a better perspective it must be kept in mind that if Addison's style never degenerates into obscurities, verbal conceits or other banalities, it also fails to rise to the heights of Milton's or Hooker's or Jeremy Taylor's prose. It has neither the sonority of Thomas Browne nor the eloquence of Burke. It is to be regarded not as the best English prose, scaling the heights of human utterance and carrying a heavy burden of complex thought, but as the best model of the 'middle style,' neat, lucid and graceful. Dr. Johnson's encomium is a fitting tribute to the qualities of Addison's style ; "His prose is the model of the middle style ; on grave subjects not formal, on light on grovelling ; pure without scrupulosity, and exact without apparent elaboration ; always equable and always easy, without glowing words or pointed sentences." And therefore Johnson advises all those who wish to "attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious" to give their days and nights to the volumes of Addison.

By contrast with Addison's, Steele's style is colourful and warm. Steele was more human than his friend, and his style reflects this aspect of his personality. Addison could never have written such a warmly human line as this one in which Steele pays a compliment to Lady Elizabeth Hastings—"to love her was a liberal education." As in Bacon, we find two styles in the works of Steele : "one eminent, gracious, dignified, the style which corresponds to his moods of elevation and didacticism ; the other careless, flexible, free, like his ordinary life." The second manner is best seen in his letter to his wife which abundantly reflects his abandonment to the feeling of the

moment and his essential humanity.

Swift is by common consent the greatest prose writer of the Augustan age. He turned prose into a powerful weapon of social criticism. Few writers in the whole range of English literature can match, much less surpass, the incisive vigour and trenchant quality of his style. Devoid of metaphors and ornament, Swift's style is plain and direct. Supple but forceful, it can move from narrative to highly ironic statement. We shall discuss his style at length elsewhere in this book.

Another important prose writer of the eighteenth century was Lord Chesterfield. He will be remembered as a writer for his *Letters to His Son*. He was an apostle of refined elegance both in life and letters.

The Style of Dr. Johnson (1709-84) is often described as *Johnsonese*, the coinage of a new phrase is ample evidence of the strong characteristics of his prose. His style is noted for its affected manner and ponderosity. A number of Latin words find their way into his prose. Commenting on his style, Moody and Lovett say : "Johnson doubles epithets, adds illustrations, develops, expands, modifies, balances, repeats, and exhausts the idea before he will have done with it. His sentences are thus complicated and weighty, full of inversions, depending much on rhetorical artifices such as antithesis and climax. But this elaborate manner is not always out of place. It occasionally gives to Johnson's writing a sombre and splendid eloquence, as in the opening passage of *Rasselas*."³⁵ The influence of the mannered style of Johnson did for a while push into background the easy colloquial prose style of Addison and Steele and inspired the use of a fastidious style. We reproduce below a passage from the essay, *The Miseries and Prejudice of Old Age* to illustrate some salient features of his style :

"Piety is the only proper and adequate relief of decaying man. He that grows old without religious hopes, as he declines into imbecility, and feels pains and sorrows crowning incessantly upon him, fall into a gulf of bottomless misery, in which every reflection must plunge him deeper, and where he finds only new gradations of anguish and precipices of horror."

A contemporary of Dr. Johnson, Goldsmith (1728-74) is

35. Moody and Lovett, *History of English Literature*, p. 218.

easily one of the most attractive figures of the Johnson circle. His style is eminently suited for writing periodical essays in which he is, by turns, gay and melancholy, ironic and humorous, reflective and playful. In his sudden movements from "delicate fancy to selfish merriment," he seems to anticipate Charles Lamb and Leigh Hunt.

Before the eighteenth century came to a close, it threw up two great prose writers in Gibbon and Burke who continued the tradition of studied, ornate prose style. Gibbon's style is elaborate, massive, solid, and is commensurate with the monumental theme of his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Such is the over-whelming impact of his style that it sweeps the reader along in its onward march. Though Burke has bequeathed to the posterity nothing as massive as Gibbon's *the Decline*, yet he will continue to receive critical attention for the nobility of his thought and the intensity of passion that burns through his writing. Since he was first and foremost an orator, his prose is rhetorical in tone and is enriched with splendid imagery, heightened by passionate declamations and cadenced utterances, and vivified by a fervour born of a conviction of the rightness of his guiding principles. One wishing to experience the full power of his eloquence must turn to his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Take, for example, his preoration in praise of the Queen of France :

"It is now sixteen years since I saw the Queen of France then the dauphiness, at Versailles ; and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere, she just began to move in,—glittering like the morning star, full of life, and splendour, and joy. Oh ! what a revolution.....little did I dream that I should have lived to see such disasters fallen upon her in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of men of honour, and of cavaliers. I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult. But the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and calculators, has succeeded ; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever.

It is impossible not to be moved by his superb eloquence.

The splendid image of the Queen shining like a morning star and other heightened expressions in the passage never give the impression of being tagged on to the main argument ; they harmonize remarkably well with the elevated tone of the piece.

VI. EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

The early years of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of the personal essay in which the writer does not sermonizes or condescend to speak from his position of lofty eminence but enters into an intimate, confidential chat with the reader, taking him along as a companion in all "the meanderings of his thought." The personal essay stands in direct relation to the periodical essay and is a logical development of it. With the revival of feelings that took place in the early nineteenth century the time was ripe for writers like Lamb and Hunt, Hazlitt and De Quincey, to turn to subjective prose writing. Gone is the impersonality of the eighteenth century essay ; now the writer adds the charm of his personality to his writing. This new development influences the prose style also and makes it more personal, more colourful and perhaps more exotic.

The essays of Leigh Hunt (1784-1819) exhibit the conversational ease of an intimate friendly talk. His style is agreeable and easy, though at times is overused colloquialism. His affinity with the essayists of the Queen Anne age is obvious. His style is never under the pressure of thought, and a sprightliness of spirit enlivens most of his writings.

Charles Lamb (1775-1834), the prince of the essayists as he is called, is singularly individual both in manner and method of writing. His style is often termed "quaint" to underline his love of obsolete, forgotten, quaint words and of verbal oddities. His strong admiration of the Elizabethans led him to cull peculiar words and expressions from them and to fuse them into his style. Sometimes he coins new words and shows a weakness for compound words. His whimsicality is much in evidence in his description of the poor chimney-sweeper :

"I like to meet a sweep—understand me—not a grown sweeper—old chimney-sweepers are by no means attractive—but one of those tender novices, blooming through their first nigritude, the maternal washings not quite effaced from the cheek—such as come forth with the dawn, or some-what earlier, with their little profes-

sional notes sounding like the *peep-peep* of a young sparrow ; or liker to the matin-lark should I pronounce them, in their aerial ascents not seldom anticipating the sunrise ?”

Another feature of his style is his bold use of metaphors which convey his peculiar vision. On many occasions he heaps up many metaphors together to describe a single object—a tendency common among the Elizabethan writers. As soon as we start reading the essay, *Poor Relations*, we are greeted with a collocation of strange metaphors :

“A poor Relation—is the most irrelevant thing in nature, a piece of impertinent correspondency,—an odious approximation,—a haunting conscience,—a preposterous shadow, lengthening in the noontide of your prosperity,—an unwelcome remembrancer, a perpetually recurring mortification,—a drain on your purse,—a more intolerable drain on your pride,—a drawback upon success,—a rebuke to your rising.....”

and the catalogue of metaphors continues till Lamb has exhausted all possible possibilities. And when he wants to gain sympathy for the innocent chimney-sweeper he again makes liberal use of metaphors. They are pictured as “dim specks—poor blots—innocent blacknesses.”

But perhaps more than any other thing it is his humour that lends a tender beauty to his prose pieces. The use of antique words, quaint phrases, and the device of exaggeration is closely aligned to his sense of humour. Here is an example of the use of exaggeration for the purpose of creating a humorous effect. Lamb, describing his reading, says, “I know less geography than a schoolboy of six weeks' standing. To me a map of old Ortelius is as authentic as Arrowsmith. I do not know whereabout Africa merges into Asia ; whether Ethiopia lie in one or other of those great division.” (*The Old and The New Schoolmaster*).

Lamb's style was formed under the influence of the seventeenth century writers whom he dearly loved and praized. The elements of his style were derived from Thomas Browne, Robert Burton and Fuller. But Lamb's style is not mere mechanical exercise in the art of imitation ; he amalgamated and integrated the borrowed elements fully to create a wholly new and individual style. Arthur Compton-Rickett remarks :

“As a stylist does he walks in the past, gathering to himself the pleasant tricks and mannerism of bygone writers, just as a girl plucks flowers instinctively that blend with her looks and carriage. The blossoms are culled from other men’s gardens, but their blending is all Lamb’s own.....His style is a mixture certainly of many styles, but a chemical not a mechanical mixture.”

Hazlitt’s style combines ease with strength. His was a very incisive mind, and the vigour of his word reflects the mind behind it. He lacks the ineffable charm of Lamb ; the directness of his prose contrasts with the subtle refinement of Lamb.

Thomas De Quincey’s style partakes more freely of romantic qualities. It is highly imaginative and poetic ; his prose often impinges upon the domain of poetry. Charged with incantatory rhythms, his prose style can with facility conjure up dream and dream-like atmosphere but is certainly not a fit tool for writing about less exotic, less enchanting things.

Walter Savage Landor is perhaps the most classical of all early nineteenth century writers. His prose has an artistic poise and a sculptured grace rarely found in other writers, and certainly missing in the works of his contemporaries. His phrases are carefully chiselled and on the whole he exhibits classical love of restraint and balance. Also, one notices in his prose a feeling for the music of the word and his language adapts itself to all shades of emotion.

VII. THE VICTORIAN AGE

Of the many prose writers of this age, we shall content ourselves with a discussion of the style of only those who have gained general recognition for their literary merits.

The style of Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-59) was obviously influenced by his parliamentary career. It is a debator’s style, marked by strong contrasts, striking antitheses and rhetorical exaggerations. It is, as Hugh Walker says, “compelling rather than persuasive, argumentative, not insinuating.” Its vividness and its picturesque element helped Macaulay to infuse life and dramatic interest in his historical narratives.

In Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), we meet a writer who is very different from Macaulay, both temperamentally and stylistically. He employed a style remarkable for its idiosyncracy : intense but violent. In it one encounters an idiom that is entirely un-

English and also archaisms, inversions, abrupt pauses and occasional opacity. Indeed his style is one of the most personal ; he writes like nobody else and nobody else has ever written like him. But whatever its faults, his style is always forceful and animated by a passionate ardour. It proved a powerful weapon in the hands of one who combined "metaphysical idealism with the burning faith of an Ezekiel" and who aimed at arousing his countrymen from the spiritual lethargy into which they have fallen. What strikes one most in his writing, is his power to penetrate the surface and reach to the core of the thing. In describing Shakespeare as not only sea-wide but also sea-deep he demonstrates the power of his style in catching the innermost truth in few words.

The influence of the Bible, which Ruskin (1819-1900) has made to study and memorise during his childhood, is apparent on his style. His prose not only echoes the rhythm and music of Biblical English but also shows a deliberate effort on the part of the writer to heighten its tone. The early style of Ruskin is too flowery and ornate. The prose of his middle years best represent his genius ; and style of this period, though not so contrived as that of early years, is yet instinct with a passion that searches for the beautiful and permanent in all things. And so when he writes of the noble beauty of Venice as it appeared to Giorgione, his prose itself takes on an ennobled tone : "No foulness, nor tumult, in those tremulous streets, that filled, or fell, beneath the moon ; but rippled music of majestic change, or thrilling silence. No weak walls could rise above them ; no low-roofed cottage, nor straw-built shed—only the strength as of rock, and the finished setting of stones most precious. And around them, far as the eye could reach, still the soft moving of stainless waters proudly pure." The is a lyrical strain in his prose ; it can be deliberately poetic and exhibit its lyricism in purple patches.

Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) as a prose writer was concerned primarily with criticism of society, religion, and letters ; therefore his prose lacks the conscious artistry of Ruskin. It is more workmanlike and less eloquent. However, it has the virtues of urbanity and sweet reasonableness of tone. Arnold often repeats set phrases and words to strengthen his argument. Many years younger to Arnold, Walter Pater (1839-1894) carried on the tradition of conscious artistic prose. He was an aesthete whose ideas and critical works provided considerable impetus

to Art for Art's sake theory. Pater's ideas regarding the importance and function of style can be best seen in his *Essay on Style*. In practice, Pater shows a feeling for finer shades and nuances of words and uses them to great effect in creating a fit atmosphere for the proper reception and appreciation by the reader of the thought being communicated to him. Peter is always striving for exquisiteness of expression and invests his writing with a lyrical beauty that cannot fail to move the reader. His concluding remarks, at the end of *The Renaissance*, where he defends the aesthetic value of an experience, exhibit the exquisiteness of his style :

“While all melts under our feet we may well grasp at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted horizon to set the spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange colours, any curious odours, or work of the artist's hands, or the face of one's friend. Not to discriminate every moment some passionate attitude in those about us and in the every brilliancy of their gifts some tragic dividing of forces on their ways. is, on this short day of frost and sun, to sleep before evening. With this sense of the splendour of our experience and of its awful brevity, gathering all we are into one desperate effort to see and touch, we shall hardly have time to make theories about the things we see and touch. What we have to do is to be for ever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions, never acquiescing in a facile orthodoxy of Comte, or of Hegel, or of our own.....”

R. L. Stevenson (1850-1894) stands in sharp contrast to Arnold and Froude. The last two were impatient when questioned about their style ; they never bothered much about the way they wrote. But Stevenson achieved a style, and for that matter a remarkable style, by conscious study of words and expressions. The sense of style explains much of the charm of his romances like *Treasure Island* or *The New Arabian Nights*. His style is shot through with a humour that is often freakish and elusive.

VIII. YESTERYEARS

Among the writers who were writing prose at the beginning of the twentieth century, George Gissing, Kipling, G. K. Chesterton and H. G. Wells deserve attention. Gissing's prose is

well adapted to realistic description : Kipling's has a journalistic flavour. G. K. Chesterton shows a love of the extravagant and a partiality for paradox. Wells's social fiction is marked by an undercurrent of satire, while his science-fiction shows a marked tendency towards amassing detail in order to concrete imaginary world.

IX. 'RECENT WRITERS

In the last fifty years English prose has undergone a great change. The new writers experimented ruthlessly with words and techniques in order to find out an adequate way to express their highly subjective vision of reality. Writers like James Joyce threw all inhibitions and conventions to the winds, dislocated syntax, coined new words in their feverish attempt to make language communicate the very flow and flux of thought itself. In Virginia Woolf a poetic vision searches for adequate symbols to embody itself. D. H. Lawrence's impressionistic writing succeeds in evoking the emotion which he seeks to realise. In Huxley one feels the vigour of his immense intellect. He is incisive, witty, and provocative.

From Llyl and Sidney to James Joyce and Virginia Woolf is indeed a far cry. The prose style reflects not only the temper of the writer but also the general intellectual climate of the age. It is florid and deliberate in the Elizabethan age ; eloquent and poetic in the hands of Milton, Browne and Taylor ; clear, easy, yet elegant in the Augustan age ; pompous and affected in the hands of Johnson and Gibbon ; artistic and self-conscious in the case of Ruskin and Peter ; tortured but singularly forceful and vigorous in the writing of Carlyle ; and it remains to be seen what new shapes it will take in the hands of the moderns who are bent upon experimenting with new and yet newer modes of expression.

CHAPTER IV

LIFE AND WORKS OF JONATHAN SWIFT

I. AN ENIGMA

The life of a man of letters is always a subject of animated curiosity ; and it is more so in the case of a provocative personality like Jonathan Swift. Not only to his own contemporaries but even to his later critics and readers he has remained an enigmatic and controversial figure : the legends that have swirled around him, the controversies connected his public career and private life, the mystery that surrounds some aspects of his life, have long stood in the way of fair and objective estimate of his genius. Personal feelings seem to have swayed most of his old critics and coloured their judgement of his literary merits. To make the matter worse, his life was invariably read into his works and his works were interpreted as a projection of his bitter personal life. Harold Nicholson considers him "a turncoat, a place-seeker, and a most untruthful journalist" and speaks of "the envy that turned his soul a putrid green." Diametrically opposite is the view held by Rev. Dr. Delany, who considers Swift "a steady persevering, inflexible friend" and a wise, a watchful, and a faithful counsellor." Walteer Scott, one of Swift's editors, conceded him his enormous intellectual power but accused him of using it unworthily "in exposing the worst parts of our nature." What is then the truth about this inscrutable Dean of Laracor ? Was he really a perverted genius as Scott and Thackeray would have us believe ?

Thanks to the indefatigable industry of scholars like Ricardo Quintana, Herbert Davis, F. R. Leavis, Irvin Ehrenpreis, the mystery surrounding Swift's life has largely been cleared up and now we can have a nearer and certainly a clearer view of the great satirist. To them goes the credit of disentangling Swift from the huge plethora of stories and rumours, rightly or wrongly connected with his name.

Indeed it is surprising how long and how tenaciously the detractors of Swift had clung to false traditions concerning him. Repeatedly it was asserted that the astringent satire of

Swift stemmed from his gloomy nature and his viotrolic hatred of mankind, and that these tendencies became more pronounced in the last years when he went mad. Immediately after Swift's death, one Charles Yorke publicly asserted that the great satirist was a mad man. He wrote : "Dean Swift has had a statue of lunacy taken out against him. His madness appears chiefly in most incessant strains of obscenity and swearing ; habits.....of his writings have some tincture."³⁶ In other words, the bitter satire of the *Gulliver's Travels*, the galling interpretation of human nature and repeated references to excretory functions of the body were projections of his insane mind. The same view was taken by Johnson, Thackeray and Scott, and more recently by Huxley. Johnson, that hanging-judge of the eighteenth century, piously believed that Swift's ideas "wore gradually away, and left his mind vacant," and as a result of this decay his anger at last "heightened into madness." Scott also refers to Swift's "violent and furious lunacy which was further aggravated by bodily suffering. Thackeray goes still further. He reads back Swift's later illness into his early life and writing. He speaks of "the storms and tempests of his furious mind.....the maddened hurricane of his life." He went "through life, tearing, like a man possessed with a devil." Even at the beginning of the twentieth century, Swift could not be released from this legend. It is surprising indeed that even such a perceptive critic as John Murray should have been misled and indulged in equivocation. He, too, held that Swift went mad in his last years and during that period he "was not fully responsible for his own actions." Husley's interpretation of Swift's genius is no less uncharitable. He finds Swift's writing characterized by a hatred of bowels ; in other words, by a hatred of biological functions. "Swift," says he, "hated bowels with such a passionate abhorrence that he felt a perverse compulsion to bathe continuously in the squelchy imagination of them."³⁷

Was Swift really insane ? Are we really to accept this interpretation of his life and writing ? How far is this view compatible with the immense intellectual force that the Dean displays in his satire or with the lighter side of his nature as seen

36. Irvin Ehrenpreis, *The Personality of Jonathan Swift*, p.117.
 37. Aldous Huxley, *Essay on Swift*, in *Do What You Will*, pp. 94-99.

in his short comic poems? Surely, if we are to understand the true nature of Swift we must refuse to be misled by this short-sighted view and instead see him in a wider perspective.

The legend that Swift was malignant and gloomy and that he went mad in his old age, was inspired partly by his strange behaviour towards his friends and acquaintances, and partly by his frequent references, in his letters to Stella and others, to recurring attacks of giddiness, deafness and headache. As is well-known, Swift was a life-long victim of a disease that caused him considerable anguish and concern. It has now been identified as Meniere's Syndrome. It attacks the inner ear and can result in deafness or vertigo or both. When Swift lived and suffered, there was no known cure for it, and the patient had to learn to live with his ailment. On the whole, Swift showed remarkable stoic courage in putting up with the affliction, but there were moments when he poured out the anguish of a tormented person in his letters. As early as 1710, he complained to Stella of his nausessus seizure :

“This morning sitting in my bed, I had a fit of giddiness ; the room turned round for about a minute, and then it went off, leaving me sickish, but not very. I saw Dr. Cockburn today, and he promised to send me the pills that did me good last year ; and likewise has promised to send me an oil for my ears, that he has been making for the ailment of somebody else.”

And as the great satirist declined into old age, his complaints of poor memory, deafness, headache, and nauseous seizures became more frequent. On 9th October, 1733 he wrote to Charles Ford : “I have been some months in a bad dis-spirited way with deafness, and giddiness, and fluxes.” But the letter most frequently quoted in support of the traditional view, is the one written in 1740 when Swift was in a bad shape, his health considerably impaired and his mental agility gone :

“I have been very miserable all night, and today extremely deaf and full of pain. I am so stupid and confounded, that I cannot express the mortification I am under both in body and mind. All I can say is, that I am not in torture, but I daily and hourly expect it. Pray let me know how your health is and your family. I hardly understand one word I write. I am sure my days will be very few; few and miserable they must be.”

True, these letters give the impression of a gloomy and pessimistic man behind them ; but would it not be worthwhile remembering that most of these "gloomy" letters, which Swift's critics so readily seized on, were written when he was well-advanced in life and when he had written almost all that deserves critical attention and by virtue of which he is known as a great prose writer. It would be nothing short of absurdity to suggest that Swift was as much gloomy or that his mental faculty was as much impaired when he wrote his poems, *The Battle of Books*, *A Tale of a Tub*, and *Gulliver's Travels*, as during his last few miserable years. If anything, Swift bore, his illness stoically and was overwhelmed only when he crossed his seventies and became an imbecile. One therefore finds it hard to agree with Thackeray, Johnson and Scott, all of whom read back his later illness into his earlier works and characterised his satire as a product of a malignant and gloomy person howling at the world and at all those who live in it. Perhaps the truth, as Louis A. Landa suggests, is that the dark, violent, and fierce rhetoric of his satire so unsettled his critics that he had to raise the legend of his supposed madness to explain it.³⁸ Happily, Swift has been released from this sinister myth now, and should now be possible for us to view his life and work with greater fairness.

II. BIRTH AND EDUCATION

Jonathan Swift came of an English family that had, in the year 1660, migrated from England to settle down in Ireland. His father, who was also known as Jonathan, was one of the five brothers who left their English homes in search of better fortunes. He secured for himself a minor office at the King's Inns, Dublin, but before he could go further his career was cut short by his untimely death in 1667. The future satirist was born on 30 November, 1667, seven months after the death of his father, and had to look up to his uncle, Godwin Swift, for his upbringing and early education.

"Swift," as Leslie Stephen says, "cherished a vague resentment against the fates which had mixed bitter ingredients in his lot. He felt the place as well as the circumstances of his birth to be a grievance." The Dean resented the accident of his

38. Louis A. Landa, Introduction to his edition of *Gulliver's Travels*, p. viii.

being born in Ireland and seem to have considered England as the proper place for a young man with aspirations and abilities like him. He is reported to have made this remark : "I happened by a perfect accident to be born here (Ireland), and thus I am a Teague, or an Irishman, or what people please."³⁹ Paradoxical, as it may appear, Swift never got the recognition he deserved from England and, by a strange logic of events, he had to wage a ceaseless pamphlet war on behalf of the country he disliked.

When he was hardly a year old, Swift had to suffer separation from his mother. His nurse was so much attached to him that, when she had to return to her native place in England, she kidnapped the infant and brought him over to Whitehaven. The poor mother was so much scared that she asked the nurse to keep the child with her until he was strong enough to undertake the return journey ; and so Swift remained in England for three years, during which period he was well looked after.

And when he did return to Ireland, his mother, compelled by circumstances, had to leave for her native Leicestershire. Swift was left in the custody of his uncle, and being a sensitive child he must have felt acutely the loss of father and his forced separation from his mother.

Swift was given the best possible education by his uncle. In 1674, he was sent to Kilkenny School, and afterwards, in 1682, to Trinity College, Dublin, where he obtained his B. A. degree in 1686. At College, Swift did not distinguish himself in any way that foreshadowed the future satirist. He did not have much liking for the subjects taught there, and was in fact given his B. A. degree '*speciali gratia*.' Swift's own account of his stay at college explains his undistinguished career as partly due to the ill-treatment of his relations which had a discouraging effect on him, and also due partly to lack of interest in the subjects taught. Says he : "By the ill-treatment of his nearest relations he was so much discouraged and sunk in his spirits that he too much neglected his academic studies, for some parts of which he had no great relish by nature, and turned himself to reading history and poetry, so that when the time came for taking his degree of Bachelor of Arts, although he had lived with great regularity and due observance of the statutes, he was sto-

39. Quoted in Leslie Stephen's *Swift*, p. 3 (E. M. L. Series)

pped of his degree for dulness and insufficiency ; and at last hardly admitted in a manner little to his credit, which is called in that college, "*speciali gratia.*"⁴⁰

Swift was still studying at Trinity College when the normal life in Ireland was disturbed by the political events in England. The glorious Revolution of 1688 had dethroned James II, and brought to the throne, William of Orange and Queen Anne, both of whom were against the policy of their predecessor which favoured the catholics. The new revolution shook the very foundations of Irish life. Violence broke out at several places. Swift, like many others, crossed over to England for safety of his life. Thus ended Swift's first sojourn in Ireland, and to Ireland was he destined to come again when his political career was wrecked. But of that, later on.

III. STAY AT MOOR PARK

His uncle having died in 1688, and with no other reliable source of help in sight, Swift had to look for a job to support himself. By the end of 1689, he was working as a secretary at Moor Park, the estate of one Sir William Temple, a retired diplomat with some interest in literature and books. At the time he was engaged in producing a collection of his essays and needed the services of a secretary to help him with the work. Swift's next ten years, which were to have a decisive influence on his life, were spent mostly here. Twice during this period he left Sir William Temple in May 1690, and again in 1694—to search better fortunes elsewhere, but on both the occasions, after brief periods of absence, he returned to Moor Park. In May 1690, he went to Ireland with a letter of recommendation from Sir Temple to Sir Robert Southwell, who was serving there as Secretary of State. But Swift failed to secure a secretaryship or fellowship that he was looking for, and returned to Moor Park in December 1691. He continued to work until 1694, when, after having waited for a long time for preferment in England, he returned to Dublin, took orders, and became the vicar of Kilroot, a distant place on the bleak north-eastern coast of Ireland. Here Swift began his clerical career which was to span over fifty years. Here, Swift must have felt the full impact of the horror of being exposed to the spiritual and physical decay that had set in the Anglican Establishment in Ireland. His hatred of

dissent and of non-conformity must be traced back to this date. Dissatisfied with Kilroot, Swift returned to Moor Park once again in May 1696, to resume his association with Sir Temple till the latter's death in 1699.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HIS STAY AT MOOR PARK

The Moor Park period had a formative influence on Swift as a man and as a writer. The suave and cultured atmosphere of the place must have been found by the Dean stimulating as well as congenial. Sir Temple was a man of taste and his library, rich in its collection of books of history, philosophy, literature, travel, religion and ancient wisdom, provided a rare opportunity to Swift to drink deep at the fountain of Knowledge. In the words of Ricardo Quintana, the library was a liberal education in itself. It is said that Swift on an average read ten hours every day, such was the fascination of the library. The great number of allusions in *The Battle of Books* are a pointer to his intensive and extensive reading.

Also, the life at Moor Park sharpened his social perception and afforded him an opportunity to observe the world of refinement and sophisticated elegance from close quarters. Ricardo Quintana is of the opinion that the air of refinement which we notice in his early satire must have been acquired at Moor Park.

And it was at Moor Park that Swift first tried, though somewhat unsuccessfully, to be a poet. Among the better known poems of this period are *Odes to King William*, *Ode to the Athenian Society*, and *Ode to Temple*. As is clear from these poems, the framework of a poem was least suited for the expression of his free-flowing intellectual energy ; the framework often yielded to the pressure of thought. Though Swift's poems do not have many artistic qualities to raise them above the level of mediocrity, yet they do have a rough energy which is often directed against all sub-lunary forms of falsity and corruption. There are unmistakable evidence in these poems that the satirist in Swift was gradually finding his voice. For example, in the *Ode to Temple*, Swift digresses from the praise of his patron to have a dig at his pedantic companions of Trinity College, Dublin :

"We have too long been led astray ;
Too long have our misguided souls been taught
With rules from musty morals brought,
'Tis you must put us in the way ;
Let us (for shame !) no more be fed

With antique relics of the dead,
 The gleanings of philosophy ;
 Philosophy, the lumber of the schools,
 The roguery of alchemy.”

But it was not long before that Swift discovered that his genius lay in another field, and so turned his attention to prose satire.

By common consent, Moor Park is considered to have brought to surface the latent satiric powers of Swift. Already he had acquired a sense of style while working on the essays of his patron ; and later, when he was called upon to write in support of Temple, he produced a satiric work of a high order, *The Battle of the Books*. Sir Temple had raised a storm of controversy with his *Essay on Ancient and Modern Learning*. Richard Bentley and William Wotton attacked the views and findings of Sir Temple : the former questioned the authenticity of Aesop's *Fables and Epistles* of Philaris, two books on which Temple had relied to support his view of the superiority of the ancients. Wotton defended the moderns against Temple's attack. To save the reputation of his patron, Swift thought of issuing a rejoinder. Personally, Swift might not have felt involved in the controversy, but his satiric darts were sharp enough to silence the critics and to tilt the balance in favour of Temple.

A Tale of a Tub, generally regarded as a masterpiece of satiric literature, was also penned at Moor Park, though the idea of exposing religious corruptions might have occurred to Swift while he was working as a clergyman at Kilroot. It defends the Anglican church as a *via media* and attacks Roman Catholicism and Puritan Dissent for deviating from the path of true religion. As Swift himself pointed out, the two main themes are : (i) corruptions in religion, and (ii) corruptions in learning. The three brothers Peter, Martin, and Jack stand for Roman Catholicism, the Church of England, and Puritan Dissent respectively. In an allegorical manner, Swift tells us how the coat, representing true religion, given to each of the three brothers by their dying father, is decorated with ornament by Peter and Jack. Their strange behaviour raises the tailor to the level of a deity and man himself seems no more than a “Micro-coat, or rather a compleat Suit of Cloathes with all its Trimmings.” The society that Peter and Jack inhabit is a society which mistakes the external for the essence,

body for soul. While Peter grows more and more insolent and spoils his coat with all sorts of ornament, Jack, in the rush of enthusiasm, tears away the trimmings in such a violent manner that the coat itself is damaged. Martin, on the other hand, is careful that the coat is not torn in the process of discarding the trimmings. And so Swift establishes the Anglican Church as representing true religion, and guided by commonsense. There are other allegorical episodes also which strengthen the viewpoint that in matters of religion and learning men should be guided not by Fancy, but by Reason.

The third literary piece to come from the pen of Swift during the Moor Park period was *A Discourse on Mechanical Operation of the Spirit*. Once again Swift is at the throats of the Dissenters ; he suggests that "the inspiration of the Non-conformists is sexual in origin." But Swift is not content to stop here. His distrust of enthusiasm seem to have overpowered him. The book enlarges its scope to include a discussion of all possible forms of inspiration and the folly of trusting to inspiration ; all idealisms are shown to be various forms of madness ; all sciences, futile ; all philosophies, hallucination ; the best is "the serene peaceful state of being a fool among knaves."

The Moor Park period came to end with the death of Sir Temple, in 1699. But by that time, Swift had realised his powers as a prose satirist. His social perception already sharpened by his contact with the sophisticated life of Moor Park, his mind enriched with best classical learning, it is now only a matter of time when the great satirist will tear asunder all fabrics of illusion, expose all that is sham and pretentious.

IV. IN THE WHIRLPOOL OF POLITICS AND RELIGION

After the death of his patron, Swift was left with no or little means to support himself. The period of twelve years after 1799 was to prove decisive in his life. Though his hopes of a lucrative living in England did not fructify, yet his active involvement in matters concerning religion and state raised him overnight into a public figure of considerable repute, especially in political circles. It was also during this eventful period that Swift came to formulate definite views regarding relation of state and religion and regarding his own position in the context of the political controversy then going on between the Whigs

and the Tories (For a fuller account of the political events of the time, the reader should go through the First Chapter).

Unable to find any other source of income, Swift accepted the post of a chaplain under Lord Berkeley, who had then been appointed as an Irish Lord Justice. And so in the year 1699, at the age of thirty-two, we find him again in Ireland. From now onwards until 1719 he would continue to flit between England and Ireland, and though not succeeding in his efforts to get a living in England, yet he would continue to look upon the exciting London scene as the proper place for him. In February 1700, he was preferred to livings of Laracor and a few other parishes and in the October of the same year, he was given a prebend in St. Patrick' at Dublin.

(i) *Among the Whigs*

His training under Sir Temple had given Swift a fine understanding of the working of English political system and parties. The library at Moor Park afforded the unique opportunity to read deeply into classical political theories and systems, the knowledge of which Swift was to use to great effect while penning his first political pamphlet. Swift was drawn into the vortex of political controversy by force of events. Lord Berkeley, under whom he worked as a chaplain, was a Whig, and Swift's association first with Temple, then with Berkeley, must have inclined him sympathetically towards some of the views of the Whigs ; and when in 1701, he got a chance to come to the rescue of the hard-pressed Whig party, he did not hesitate and immediately plunged himself into the thick of controversy, hardly realising the far-reaching consequence of his act. The occasion was the impeachment of Whig lords by the Tories for their guilt in having supported the war policy of King William. The Whigs were really in a corner. And just at the most appropriate moment, help came from Swift in the shape of political pamphlet which warned the Tories against the grave dangers of impeachment. Drawing up on his vast knowledge of classical political systems, Swift drew parallels between the English parliament and its Greek counterparts, between English political figures and their Greek counterparts. The pamphlet, *A Discourse of the Contests and Discussions Between the Nobles and Commons in Athens and Rome*, traced the growth of the British Constitution since the Conquest and showed that the strength of England as a nation lay in preserv-

ing the balance of power between king, nobles and commons. Any attempt to disturb the delicate balance would jeopardise the stability of the nation. He, therefore, sounded a note of warning to the Tories, who dominated the House of Commons, to desist from proceeding against the Whig lords. It proved a very effective piece of political writing and won for its author the friendship of influential Whigs like Halifax and Somers.

A word about Swift's political position. Though he had written in defence of the Whigs and had allowed himself to be considered as a moderate whig, yet he had neither written out of a conviction of the rightness of the Whig cause nor did all his views agree with the views of the party. The fact is that Swift's political position throughout his life was decided by his unwavering loyalty to the Church. He agreed with all those political opinions that seemed to support supremacy of the Anglican Church, and rejected or opposed those that went against his convictions. With him, therefore, the labels of the parties did not carry much meaning ; it was what they actually did that decided his attitude towards them. When he supported the Whigs, it was under the impression that they accepted the revolution of 1688, were against absolutism and in favour of liberty. But when Swift found the Whigs going against the interest of the Anglican Church, he severed his connections with them and joined the Tories. One cannot, therefore, charge Swift of being a political turn-coat ; in his case the change of political allegiance did not involve the change of his political and religious views. It was only that, in 1710. after a long frustrating association with the Whigs, Swift found the Tories more sympathetic to the causes that were near and dear to him.

(ii) *In the Whig Literary Circle*

The Contests and Discussions had won for Swift a place in the Whig circles, both political and literary. Even when he was continually being tossed about from Ireland to England and vice versa, he found time enough to mix among Whig men of letters and strike friendship with Steele and Addison. The friendship was not to endure long, but for the time it lasted it, must have provided a stimulating, congenial atmosphere to Swift. He also contributed to *Tatler*, a periodical brought out by Steele.

Also, it was during these happy years of his friendship with

the celebrated essayists that Swift wrote those utterly delightful *Bickerstaff Papers*. Says Ricardo Quintana, "Never did Swift' peculiar drollery work to happier effect than in the Bickerstaff pamphlets. Here was wit for the gods, and from Olympus to London there was hilarious laughter."⁴¹ Bickerstaff was created to knock one famous astrologer, Patridge, out of existence. The almanac-maker was hated by Swift for his unscrupulous tactics ; he cashed in on popular superstitions and was always loud in his anti-clerical utterances. His predictions were widely read. Swift, therefore, created another astrologer in the figure of Bickerstaff, who, in his *Predictions for the Year 1708*, announced beforehand the death of Patridge on the night of 29th of March and two days after the scheduled date confirmed his death. And when Patridge protested that he was very much alive, Swift came out with the rejoinder that his ghost was stalking the streets of London. Two more pamphlets, *The Accomplishment of the First of Mr. Bickerstaff's Predictions* (1708) and *A Vindication of Issac Bickerstaff, Esq.* (1709) kept up the Joke.

(iii) *Pamphlets Concerning Relation Between State and Church*

During the years 1704-1710, Swift published a number of pamphlets reflecting his thinking on the vital issue of relation between State and Church. As we saw in the *Introduction* above, religion and politics were invariably mixed up together in the seventeenth century. Swift as a Churchman was staunch in his loyalty and he never gave up his religious convictions for political reasons. After having sided with the Whigs earlier, it became necessary for Swift to consider his position and to redefine his views concerning the powers of church and the nature and functions of State.

Before we actually take up his religious pamphlets for consideration it will be worthwhile summarising some of his controlling ideas. In matters of religion, Swift believed the Anglican Church, established by law to be the official establishment. Any attempt to undermine its powers and position was to be strongly resisted. Then Swift had an enduring hatred of enthusiasm, in whatever form it appeared. He was always harsh on the dissenters and was against the removal of the Test Act banning the entry of non-Anglicans to high public positions. Then there was also that important controversy : Can the State

41. Ricardo Quintana, *The Mind and Art of J. Swift*, p. 164.

interfere in the affairs of church and can it take over its functions ? Is church independent of state ? Is church a mere contrivance of the civil power as Tindall suggested ? Swift's position in all these matters is that of a person who wents to be guided by Reason in all matters, whether political or religious. While the State may intervene in affairs of church but it cannot take over its functions. Also, that absolutism is not acceptable as violating all principles of commonsense. Swift opposed the theory of church's passive obedience of State. He rather thought that State and Church were mutually dependent.

In *Sentiments of a Church-of-England Man* (1708), he examines Church-State relationship from a non-party standpoint of view. Extremism in party-politics is frowned upon and church is held as above party strifes. To those who desire "to preserve the Constitution entire in Church and State," Swift advises "to avoid the Extreams of Whig for the sake of the former, and the Extreams of Tory on account of the latter."

A Project for the Advancement of Religion was written with the express intention of exposing corruption in high places. He urges the government to free the nation of hypocrisy and corruption and believes that the action for reformation when once initiated by the administration will bring religion into fashion.

Arguments Against Abolishing Christianity (1708), is a masterpiece of ironical writing. Swift firmly believed in revealed religion, which was often attacked by the deist who believed in natural religion. Here was a chance for Swift to hit back at the deist and he did so with telling effect. The arguments of the deist are laughed away. He relies mainly upon the weapon of irony to defend the Established Church against the attacks of free-thinkers and men of pleasure.

Covering himself behind the impersonation of an Irish M. P., Swift once again set out to defend the Anglican Church in the pamphlet entitled, *A Letter from a Member of the House of Commons of Ireland Concerning the Sacramental Test* (1708). There had for some time indication that the Whig ministry wanted to repeal the Test Act in Ireland in order to free the dissenters from the restriction they were under. Being a staunch Churchman, Swift at once proceeded to warn the government of the grave consequences that might follow its action. The tone of the tract is surprisingly even and temperate, a phenomenon

not very common with Swift. In a passage remarkable for its impact, Swift accuses England of disreading the interest of Ireland whereas the latter has always put the interests of the former above her own : "If your little finger be sore," says the Irish M. P., "and you think a Poultice made out of our vitals will give it any Ease, speak the Word, and it shall be done."

(iv) *Break With the Whigs*

The same Swift who had so enthusiastically defended the cause of the Whigs in 1701, was a disappointed man by 1709 ; the Whigs had belied his expectation, not only in matters connected with his personal advancement but, more importantly in matters where his convictions were put to severe test. Swift as a clergyman sympathised with the hard lot of the Irish clergies and, when requested by them, undertook to approach the Whig ministry for remission of First Fruits to them. Repeatedly Swift approached Godolphin to fulfil his promise, and on every occasion he was assured of a favourable action. But it seems Godolphin never seriously tried to translate his promise into reality. His attitude of coldness towards a cause held so dear by Swift must have revolted the latter. Even while Swift was becoming increasingly disillusioned with the policy of the Whig party, there arose the question of repeal of Test Act in Ireland which deeply hurt him and convinced him that his way was not the way of the Whigs. The Test Act had excluded all non-Anglicans from holding important public offices. It was meant to safeguard the interest of the Anglican Establishment. The Whig ministry was eager to win over the support of the dissenters and so as a first step sought the repeal of the Act in Ireland. The occasion produced another pamphlet from the pen of Swift, *A Letter From a Member of the House of Commons in Ireland Concerning the Sacramental Test*. In 1710, Swift was to issue another blow in the shape of a pamphlet against Lord Wharton, the Whig lord who was the chief figure behind repeal-the-Test-Act movement. It was a scathing personal attack that made short work of the adversary. Nothing could be more damaging than Wharton's description as "a Presbyterian in Politics, and an Atheist in Religion ; but he chuseth at present to whore with a Papist."

When, therefore, the Whig ministry fell in 1710, Swift must have heaved a sigh of relief. He broke his old connections and henceforth wrote for the Tories.

(v) *As a Tory Satirist*

The Queen dismissed the Whig ministry of Godolphin on 8th August 1710. By that time it had become thoroughly discredited. Its anti-Church attitude and its unfortunate policy of carrying on the war with France had inspired a country-wide reaction against it. The unfortunate trial of Dr. Henry Sacheverell, a High Tory, brought the wrath of Church on it. After its eventual dismissal, the moderate Tory Harley was installed as Chancellor of the Exchequer, with St. John as a Secretary of State. Harley was committed to bringing the war with France to an end by concluding a peace treaty and to safeguard the Church. His moderate views were under pressure after the Tory's overwhelming victory in the October 1710 election, but Harley generally steered clear of extreme views and respected the sentiments of the nation.

When Swift returned to England in August 1710 to renew the appeal of the Irish clergy for remission of First Fruits, he found the atmosphere electric with excitement. The new ministry's policies were anxiously awaited. Harley was in need of a person who could, through his pen, influence the public opinion in favour of new policies which he meant to make public shortly. In Swift, he at once recognized a genius who could wield the pen like a sharp sword. Therefore, when Swift put forward his petition on behalf of the Irish clergy, Harley, in sharp contrast to languishing attitude of Godolphin, acted quickly and favourably too. He promised that the royal proclamation would soon be issued—an event which must have filled the petitioner with happiness and pride. But as so often in his life, Swift was not destined to have the credit for this success. Even as preparations were being made to make the formal announcement, and Swift was writing to Stella of the success of his long drawn-out efforts, news came from the Irish clergy that they were entrusting the task of approaching the new ministry to a more suitable person. And when the announcement of the remission did come the credit for it was given to Ormonde, the Lord Lieutenant. An embittered Swift wrote to Stella, "I remit their ('the Irish clergies') First-Fruits of Ingratitude, as freely as I got the other remitted to them." However, this incident was to weigh considerably with Swift. By their prompt action the Tories proved themselves as a Church party and won for themselves the support of one of the greatest satirists of all times.

(vi) *Editorship of Examiner*

As a Tory man of letters, Swift's first assignment was to edit the weekly *Examiner*. It was started with a view to rally public opinion round the Tories and to make them agree to their policies, especially to a peace treaty with France. Swift was in charge of the weekly from November 1710 to June 1711, during which period he contributed some thirty-two papers to it. Any one reading his contribution cannot fail to be impressed by his deadly rhetoric ; everywhere there is evidence of an incisive mind at work. He hit out at the Whigs as effectively as he defended his own party. The very first number from his pen was about the bloody War of Spanish Succession. The gruesome picture of its consequences that he painted was meant to reflect, by implication, on the stupidity of the Whigs who had carried it on for such a long time, and to secure approval of the Tory's peace efforts. That is how he argues in the *Examiner* :

"If the war continues some years longer, a landed man will be little better than a farmer at a rack rent, to the army, and to the public funds."

Before Swift gave up its editorship, in 1711, he had turned the weekly into a powerful organ of the party. No one can grudge the praise given him by John Murray who says that "no more consummate political journalism has ever been written than Swift's *Examiner*."⁴²

(vii) *Tory Pamphlets (1710-1714)*

Now the Dean was actively engaged in the challenging task of creating a favourable public image of the Harley ministry. During the short period of the Tory government, he was at the height of his powers. Public recognition had at last come to him ; the power of his pen was widely acknowledged ; he was most welcome in higher society, political as well as literary. Friendship with such eminent literary figures as Alexander Pope and John Arbuthnot must have been very satisfying to the Dean personally. But this eventful period will be remembered for the remarkable satirical pieces that came from his pen in defence of his party.

His earliest two Tory pamphlets—*Some Remarks Upon*

a Pamphlet Entitled A Letter to the Seven Lords and A New Journey to Paris—should not detain us long. Written against the political background of the day, they are of interest only to the historian who desires to acquaint himself with the political bickerings between the Tories and the Whigs. The latter—*A New Journey to Paris*—was written to distract the public opinion while the Tories were engaged in negotiating peace terms with France. Prior, who had been sent to France for the purpose, was unfortunately arrested by a foolish custom official and soon the incident became the talk of the town. In order to save the peace negotiations, Swift published *A New Journey to the Paris* which purported to be an account by a French servant of his English master's journey from Calais to Paris. The piece should interest the students of literature for its employment of an imaginary character to narrate the journey—a device which Swift would use in his more important works as well.

The question of war or peace was again broached in *The Conduct of the Allies*, a pamphlet written in November 1711, to forestall a possible Whig attack on the Tory ministry's efforts to end the War of Spanish Succession. The Whigs during their tenure in the office had continued the war at an enormous cost to the treasury. It was the aim of Swift to show that in fighting the war with the Allies, England had gained nothing except being burdened with a heavy national debt. Clearly then it was a folly to continue to fight, as Swift was prompt to point out, "We have been principals," he says, when we ought to have been auxiliaries : we have fought where "we ought not, and have abstained where our interests were at stake : we have allowed those allies, who charge us with deserting them, to be false to every engagement made with us. We have persevered, until we lie under the burden of fifty millions of debt. We have gained victories, which have brought to us nothing but barren renown." With deadly rhetoric Swift questioned the wisdom of prosecuting a war in which all advantages went to the Dutch, and England got nothing save heavy losses in life and property. If anyone still wants war, he must be unmindful of national interests—such is the thesis of Swift. The pamphlet was a notable success, as is clear from its huge sales immediately after its publication.

About this time, Swift took sweet revenge on some of the Whig personalities he hated, by lampooning them publicly.

Nottingham, formerly a Tory, but who later on voted with the Whigs, was the subject of *An Excellent New Song, Being the intended Speech of a Famous Orator Against Peace*. The Duke of Marlborough was laid low in two successive scurrilous attacks—*Fable of the Widow and Her Cat* and *Fable of Midas*, both published in the early months of 1712. However, Swift's attack of the Duchess of Somerset was unpardonable. Since the Duke of Somerset was lately manoeuvring against Harley and since the Duchess was known to share her husband's Whig leanings, Swift misunderstood her as playing a leading role in a plot against the Harley ministry. The Duchess had considerable influence with the Queen ; Swift therefore set himself the task of discrediting her in the eyes of the Queen, thereby incapacitating her from moving against the Tories. The result was a vicious personal attack in *The Windsor Prophecy*. Though Swift could not get the Duchess removed from her position of nearness to the Queen, but by attacking her he antagonised her and forever ruined his chances of getting an English deanery.

Early in 1713, the Peace of Utretch was signed. For the moment everything appeared to be alright. The Tory government emerged creditably, though not without scars, from the heated controversy. Swift must have been a tired man after the stress and strain of the war of pamphlets he had carried on against the Whigs ; for he now expressed a desire to withdraw from the political front to take up his duties as a clergyman. He had served the cause of the Tory ministry nobly and very ably : was it therefore too much if he expected them to promote him to an English deanery ? However Harley might try to postpone the matter, the insistence of Swift at last bore fruit. Not an English deanery, though, he was appointed to the deanery of St. Patrick's Dublin, and so ironically enough for all his services rendered to Harley, he was back in the country he detested. But Swift's behaviour raises a pertinent question. Should he have expected a promotion in church for services rendered in the political field ? Did he take up a clerical appointment not out of any sense of service to church but as a measure of expediency ? Henry Craik pleads for a sympathetic understanding of Swift's behaviour. It was quite consistent with the feeling of the time. Swift, argues Craik, did not enter church as a mere resort for a livelihood ; "But once he had joined her ranks, pride, as well as self-interest, impelled

him to demand a share in such prizes as he had to give."

But rest was not in store for Swift for some more time. The terms of the Peace Treaty were fiercely attacked by the opponents. Harley was charged with granting concessions to the French King. On top of it was rumoured that the Tories were secretly in negotiations with the Pretender and were manoeuvring to bring him over. Steele had issued *The Importance of Dunkirk*, with the sole aim of agitating public opinion against the Tories. He argued that Harley had not enforced the terms of the Treaty calling for demolition of Dunkirk's fortifications. Swift replied with *The Importance of the Guardian Considered*. Steele came out with the *Crisis*, to which Swift answered in that masterpiece of a pamphlet, *The Public Spirit of the Whigs*. In that tract he claimed that the Harley ministry derived its strength from the support of the general public and ridiculed Steele's alarmist propaganda. It is Reason, Swift contends, that should be our guide in all matters, not blind partisan attitude.

This took place in 1713. Even before this, in 1712, Swift had issued some pamphlets calculated to strengthen the position of the Harley government by counselling moderation among Tory extremists (*Advice to the Members of the October Club*) and by asking, in *Letter to a Whig Lord*, the moderate Whigs, not to allow themselves to be swayed by blind partisan spirit but always to keep the interest of the nation as a whole uppermost in their minds. In 1712 too, appeared *Letter of Thanks from My Lord Wharton to the Lord Bp. of S. Asaph*, in which Swift flayed Fleetwood, Bishop of St. Asaph for having made certain unpalatable remarks against the Tories. *Hue and Cry After Dismal*, another tract to appear in 1712, was a piece of pure mischievous fun. Since all the rumours set afloat by the Whigs regarding occupation of Dunkirk had come to nought, Swift suggests that, if the French King did not oblige them, they could themselves create some obstacle in the way of the English army occupying it.

We now come to the fateful year 1714. For some time the quarrel between Harley and Bolingbroke had assumed serious proportions. It appeared that the Tory ministry would fall at any moment. To add to their discomfort, it was freely argued that the Tories were trying to bring back the Pretender, a possibility which gained urgency on account of the continued

ill-health of the Queen. Swift, who was summoned to London from Ireland in a last desperate bid to patch up the quarrel, could do little to avert the inevitable fall. Bolingbroke succeeded in driving Oxford out of office in July, 1714, but his own ministry fell with the death of the Queen on 1st August, 1714. The Hanoverian succession dealt the last blow to the Tory hopes. The Whigs who now assumed power continued in office for a long time. And thus ended Swift's political career. Disappointed and disillusioned, he retired first to Berkshire, and then to Ireland, where he spent the rest of his life.

Before we close this account of Swift's political career, we would like to make a mention of his account of the four last years of Queen Anne's reign. *History of the Four Last Years* is a comprehensive account of the political developments and happenings which Swift observed from close quarters. His access to official documents has given the record an authenticity which makes his work truly interesting.

V. IN THE ABYSS OF DESPAIR (1714-1719)

Towards the end of 1714, Swift returned to Dublin as a man who had the unhappy experience of seeing his hopes and ambitions, his friends and co-workers, crushed and annihilated before his own eyes. As if what he had already endured was not enough, he found the Whig-dominated Dublin seething with hatred of him. He was declared a Jacobite and an unworthy Christian. "People hissed and booed at him in the streets, some of them even pelted him with filth from the gutters." How abject and crest-fallen the erstwhile mighty Tory pamphleteer must have felt, can be seen from his letter to Pope: "You are to understand that I live in the corner of a vast unfurnished house ; my family consists of a steward, a groom, a helper in the stable, a footman, and an old maid, who are all at board wages, and when I do not dine abroad or make an entertainment I eat a mutton pie and drink half a pint of wine."⁴³—thus Swift wrote about himself. Some of the poems written about this time also express his sense of disappointment :

"Tis true-then why should I repine,
To see my life so fast decline ?
But, why obscurely here alone ?
Where I am neither lov'd nor known.

My state of health none care to learn ;
 My life is here no soul's concern.
 And, those with whom I now converse,
 Without a tear will tend my herse.....”

Swift retained his self-respect even in his bad days. He remained steadfast in the face of threats from the new Government. There were rumours that he might be tried after Oxford, who had been put in the Tower. Swift never disowned his old friends ; on the contrary, he offered to wait upon Oxford while the latter was a prisoner waiting for the trial. The gesture speaks of the nobility of his character.

VI. THE IRISH PATRIOT

For six years, that is from 1714 to 1719, Swift remained in self-imposed exile from public life. But his was too vigorous a personality to be confined for long within the four walls of St. Patrick's. The drift of circumstances was to force him to give up his seclusion and to once again plunge into the heat and turmoil of public life. But this time his concern would be Ireland and the English settlers of this island.

Ireland in those days was under England. The mismanagement of its affairs by officers who were largely unconcerned about its sufferings, the imposition of several restrictions designed to strike at its economy and to make it dependent on England, the division of the country into two warring religious sects, the exploitation of tenants by rich landlords who lived mostly in England—all these factors had reduced Ireland to a state of utter despondency and subjection. The high-handedness of the English Government was reflected in the passing of arbitrary laws regulating Ireland's trade and industry and life generally. The Irish people could not send their cattle and meat to England but were under pain of punishment required to send all their wool and woollen goods there, because the Englishmen must be kept warm at the expense of their neighbours. The Irish Church was also under the English Parliament and its offices were usually filled with people loyal to England and ready to receive their orders from across the sea.

Now that Swift had made Ireland his home, apparently for good, he was roused to protest against its cruel exploitation by ruthless masters. He came out of his shell and launched a vigorous polemic attack against the Whig ministry of Walpole ; it was partly inspired by his hatred of his political opponents,

partly by his feelings for the suffering by Irish people.

His first pamphlet in support of the Irish cause was published in 1720 and it signalled the Dean's entry into the arena. Entitled *A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture*, it demanded an organised boycott of English goods as a measure of reprisal and the use of native goods. It listed the many affronts offered to Ireland and asked if House of commons (of Ireland) could not retaliate. Could it not pass a resolution "against wearing any Cloath or Stuff in their Families, which were not of the Growth and Manufacture of this kingdom."⁴⁴ and suggested that if anybody acted otherwise he should be "deemed and reputed as an *Enemy to the Nation*." He requests all the ladies to be "content with *Irish Stuffs* for the Furniture of their houses, for Gowns and Petticoats to themselves and their daughters. Upon the whole, and to crown all the rest, let a firm Resolution be taken, by Male and Female, never to appear with one single Shred that comes from England ; and let all the people say, AMEN."⁴⁵ At times, he adopts a tone of sarcasm to rouse Irish people from their present lethargy :

"The Scripture tells us, that *Oppression Makes a Wisest Man Mad* ; therefore, consequently speaking, the Reason why some Men are not *mad*, is because they are not *wise* : However, it were to be wished that *Oppression* would, in Time, teach a little *Wisdom to Fools*."⁴⁶

Swift was against tyranny in any form whatsoever, and, as Henry Craik says, in writing this pamphlet the bitterness of his personal feeling was added to the indignation inherent in Swift against all forms of oppression.

THE DRAPIER'S LETTERS

This pamphlet was just a beginning of the Irish struggle for economic independence in which Swift was to play the leading part. He would not suffer the English to set up a bank in Dublin ; would not idly see the poor tenants being exploited by landlords with English leanings ; would not be a spectator if the Irish Church was pressurised. But the best opportunity for Swift came when the Walpole Ministry granted a

44. *Irish Tracts And Sermons*, p. 16 (Blackwell Publication, edited by Herbert Davis).

45. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

patent to one William Wood for the supply of a new copper coin to Ireland, without any previous reference to Irish Parliament. The whole episode had come to be known as Wood's Halfpence. The coins were not of the value they represented and it was feared that their large supply would mar the Irish economy. The rumour that Wood had obtained the Patent by giving a large bribe to the Duchess of Kent and that the huge profits accruing from the supply of the unwanted and unneeded coin would go into the pockets of Englishmen, caused country-wide agitation and discontent. Swift was quick to capitalise on the opportunity offered. He issued a number of letters under the name of one M. B. Drapier, a supposed linen merchant of St. Francis Street, Dublin. The impersonation gave Swift the security he wanted, and now once again he was to demonstrate the power of his pen. In a matter of months, the whole Ireland was with him, chanting his name, worshipping him, and ready to obey his behest. One wonders if any other writer had brought about such a general upsurge through his writings. As Harold William says, in the *Drapier's Letters*, Swift "shows himself at his best as a journalist and propagandist and the organizer of a successful boycott."⁴⁷

The First Drapier Letter was written in February 1724 and addressed to the Irish tradesmen, shopkeepers, farmers, and country-people in general. After setting forth the facts of the situation, Swift warns people against the insidious moves of Wood who "is still working under hand to force his HALF-PENCE upon us." And if it is put into circulation it will cause all possible mischiefs. The soldiers, the lords, the squires, the foreign traders, will purchase real goods from Irish people and throw back the half-pence in return ; but when the common people will have to make payment, he will be forced to produce sterling. And so continues Swift, the country will be economically ruined :

"The Gentlemen of Estates will all turn off their Tenants for want of Payment ; because as I told you before, the Tenants are obliged by their Leases to pay Sterling, which is Lawful Current Money of England ; then they will turn their own Farmers, as too many

47. *The Drapier's Letters* ed. by Herbert Davis, with an Introduction by Harold Williams (Blackwell Publication).

of them do already, run all into sheep where they can, keeping only such other Cattle as are necessary ; then they will be their own Merchants, and send their Wool and Butter, and Hides, and Linnen beyond Sea for ready Money, and Wine, and Spices, and Silks. They will keep only a few miserable Cottagers. The Farmers must Rob or beg, or leave Country. The Shop-keepers in this and every other Town, must Break and Starve.”⁴⁸

Therefore, his advice to accept only that coin which is of gold or silver and to refuse the half-pence. “Stand to it One and All : Refuse this Filthy Trash. It is no Treason to rebel against Mr. Wood. His Majesty in his Patent obliges no body to take these Half-pence.”⁴⁹

The English Parliament had to take cognizance of the resentment in Ireland, such was its intensity. The first Drapier Letter had breathed life into the resistance movement. Quick came the orders from across the sea for reduction in the amount of the coin ; but Ireland was in no mood to compromise. On 5th August Mr. Drapier issued his Second Letter, urging to maintain the general boycott of the half-pence. Let no one be deceived by the English propaganda that the new coin was examined at Tower and found to satisfy all terms of the contract. “His Contract ! With Whom ? Was it with the Parliament or People of Ireland ?” asks Swift, and goes on to add : “Are not they to be the Purchasers ? But they detest, abhor, and reject it, as Corrupt, Fraudulent, mingled with Dirt and Trash.”⁵⁰ The Third Letter came out in the last week of August, addressed to the nobility and gentry, and asking them to stand guard against the Report of the Privy Council which had been released to public lately. Here, with a small circle of educated people, Swift could enter into subtler constitutional aspects. After having established the impropriety of Wood’s behaviour in publishing an Act of the Committee appointed to go into his case, without its permission, Swift in his characteristic manner attacks him personally. Then he goes on to show the arbitrary action of the English King. Will the King

48. Ibid., pp. 6, 7.

49. Ibid., p. 11.

50. Ibid., p. 16.

exercise his prerogative by getting copper coins made in Ireland for supply to England, irrespective of wishes of his subjects and Parliament ? If not, then why should he expect Ireland to accept coins minted in England ? The crux of the problem is : "the King's Prerogative is bounded and limited by the *Good and Welfare* of his *People*."⁵¹ He shows that the Patent was granted on the false presumption that Ireland needed coins, without ever explaining how such a conclusion was arrived at. The whole thing was a fraud, offending the dignity of Ireland, and meant solely to benefit a single individual—Wood—at the expense of a whole nation. In a passage of impassioned rhetoric, Swift challenges this step-motherly treatment towards Ireland :

"Were not the People of *Ireland* born as *free* as those of *England* ? How have they forfeited their Freedom ? Is not their *Parliament* as fair a *Representative* of the *People*, as that of *England* ? And hath not their Privy Council as great, or a greater Share in the Administration of public Affairs ? Are they not Subjects of the same King ? Does not same *Sun* shine over them ? And have they not the same *God* for their Protector ? Am I a *Freeman* in *England*, and do I become a *Slave* in six Hours, by crossing the *Channel* ?"⁵²

The Fourth Letter, this time significantly addressed to the whole people of Ireland, was issued on 22nd October, the date of the arrival of the new Lord Lieutenant, Carteret, who was sent to tackle the situation firmly and tactfully. The newspapers had also been putting out warnings of immediate consequences if the resistance to the new coin continued, since by doing so, the Irish people would be 'disputing the King's Prerogative.' It was therefore imperative to keep the people united and allay their fears. This was the aim behind the publication of the Fourth Letter. In its early part, Swift laughs at the slanders perpetrated by Wood against Ireland, for they are "no more than the last Howls of a Dog dissected alive." Then also there is no question of disputing the King's prerogative, for, "we own he hath Power to give a Patent to any Man, For setting his Royal Image and Superscription upon whatever Materials he pleases ;

51. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

and Liberty to the Patentee to offer them in any country from *England* to *Japan* only attended with one small Limitation, that *no body alive is obliged to take them.*⁵³ And finally he deals with the charge of insinuating people to revolt against the English King. He blames the English settlers in Ireland for the present deplorable condition of the country. Whenever the words, *Liberty* and *Property* are mentioned in their hearing, they shake their heads and tell us, that *Ireland is a* depending Kingdom ; as if they would seem, by this Phrase to intend, that the People of Ireland is in some State of Slavery or Dependence, different from those of England.⁵⁴ He reminds them of their rights and avers "that by the Laws of GOD, of NATURE of NATIONS, and of your own Country, you ARE and OUGHT to be as FREE a PEOPLE as your Brethren in England."

The Fourth Letter was too inflammable not to attract the notice of Carteret. By a queer coincidence, Swift and the new Lord Lieutenant were old acquaintances ; and perhaps the latter did not take much time to recognize the hand of his friend in *the Drapier's Letters*. Some parts of the Fourth Letter were declared seditious and the printer was made to stand trial, perhaps with a view to establish clearly the authorship of the Letter. The occasion brought another Letter from Swift, this time addressed to the Grand Jury requesting them to acquit the printer, or else they will be considered of having favoured Wood's half-pence. To rub it in, he reminds the members of the Grand Jury that they being merchants and shop-keepers are likely to suffer more by letting Wood have his way ; besides, they "do not expect any Employments in the State, to make up in their own private Advantage, by the Destruction of their Country."

By now the whole country was seething with discontent and strong resentment. The English were a sponge on Ireland. The differences of political and religious sects were sunk and the nation as a whole rallied round Swift. The greatest blow to the English Parliament was struck when the Grand Jury, trying the printer, threw out the bill brought against him. It was a triumph unprecedented and almost unexpected. With

53. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

54. *Ibid.*, pp. 61, 62.

English Parliament showing signs of weakening, Swift delivered his final blow in his next Letter addressed to Viscount Molesworth. It exudes the spirit of confidence, the confidence of a man who knows that he has after all won the battle. Swift goes over the whole thing once again. He has done nothing for which he will be sorry on the Judgment Day.

The great patriotic upsurge caused by *The Drapier's Letters* will for long be remembered in the annals of Irish history. The English Parliament had finally to bow to the will of a united people. Wood surrendered his Patents on 26th August 1725.

The Drapier's Letters are supreme example of saturnine humour, satiric imagination and powerful rhetoric. "All that Swift had learned as a satirist, as a writer on every-day matters of politics and Church, and as a journalist and propagandist was sooner or later drawn upon in the course of his great pamphlet campaign of 1724-5."⁵⁵

The struggle for Irish independence had done Swift one good. It had shaken off his mood of dismay and disillusionment and revived his spirits. Besides *the Drapier's Letters*, his energy flowed into the composition of other literary pieces, both in prose and poetry. To this period belong three poems of sustained power—*The Progress of Love*, *The Progress of Beauty* and *The Progress of Poetry*. In the sphere of prose, he wrote *Letters to a Young Gentleman, Lately Enter'd into Holy Orders* (1720), *Letter to a Young Lady, On Her Marriage* (1723) and *Advice to a Young Poet* (1721). The first assails romantic attitude towards preaching and marriage, thus once again emphasising Swift's insistence on Reason.

Besides the *Drapier's Letters*, Swift wrote, in 1720's and 1730's a number of pamphlets concerning Ireland and the welfare of her people. Among others, one can name *A Short View of the State of Ireland* (1728), *An Answer to a Paper* (1728), *Answer to the Craftsman* (1730), *Speech Delivered by Dean Swift to the Assembly of Merchants* (1736) and *Proposal for Giving Badges to the Beggars in all the Parishes of Dublin* (1736). But by far the most significant is *Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People from Being a Burthen to their Parents or country* (1729). Swift found it almost impossible to see, and see daily, the intolerable suffering of the poor Irish people,

labouring under many handicaps and wrongs. His burning anger and fierce passion found expression in the macabre satire of *the Proposal*, wherein he suggests that the Irish children should be fattened for market. The apparent coolness of the writer deepens the macabre tone of the whole piece and bring home to the reader the insufferable misery of poor Irish people.

VII. SAEVA INDIGNATIO : GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

We now come to Swift's greatest achievement in prose which has ever since its publication in 1726, excited considerable interest, and still more considerable controversy regarding its Portrayal of man as an essentially selfish, corrupt and irrational creature. Though it is difficult to say as to when Swift actually started writing the first draft, yet it can be reasonably said that the idea of a satiric narrative of imaginary voyages came to him when the members of the Scriblerus Club—a Tory group of literary figures—were discussing the possibility of pennig jointly an account of the life of an imaginary character, Martinus Scriblerus ; the Memoirs were also to include an account of his four travels. That was way back in 1713. The downfall of the Oxford Ministry upset all calculation and broke up the Scriblerus Club. When Swift retired to Ireland and was passing through a difficult period in his life, his thoughts must have turned to past historical and political events, prompting him to write a comprehensive satire on man, the various illusions he cherished and the degeneration of his nature. From Swift's letters to his friends, we know that he was at work on the *Travels* in 1721—probability is that he started working on it immediately after his arrival in Ireland and finished the first draft by 1725. It was published in London in 1726 with the help of Arbuthnot and Pope, and soon the two were to report to the author the immediate and immense popularity of the masterpiece.

The book comprises of four sections each describing one of the four “fanciful voyages” undertaken by Lemuel Gulliver, a native of Nottinghamshire. The first adventure takes him to the land of the Lilliputs—a strange country inhabited by human creatures not six inches high. There is plenty of fun in Gulliver's—The Man-Mountain, as the small creatures call him—encounter with Lilliputs. Everything that he does excite awe and astonishment in them. The account of the Lilliputs getting on to his body by means of ladders, of the enormous

food that he devours, of his visit to the capital where he walks carefully "for fear of damaging the roofs and eaves of the houses with the skirts of my coat.....(and) to avoid treading on any stragglers,"⁵⁶ of his fight against the Blefuscudians, keep the imagination engaged so completely that one hardly gets time to reflect on the probability of the story. The narrative is circumstantial and generally well sustained.

The book goes on to describe Gulliver's meritorious services to the Lilliputs, for which he gets no better reward than being accused of high treason. He flees to Blefescu and from there manages to return to his native country.

Ostensibly, an account of a highly fanciful Journey, Part I is, allegorically, a satiric commentary on the political as also religious scene in England during Queen Anne's reign. Gulliver's flight from Lilliput to Blefescu is Boling-broke's escape to France, after the fall of the Oxford Ministry, as a result of his being branded a traitor. Bolgolam, who became Gulliver's 'mortal enemy' without any provocation, is a thinly disguised version of The Earl of Nottingham, who was Swift's bitterest enemy ; Flimnap is to be identified with Walpole ; and the Emperor, with George I. The political events are also allegorically narrated. The war between the Lilliputs and the Blefuscudians is the War of Spanish Succession fought between England and France during 1701—1713 ; Lilliputs' attempt to impeach Gulliver reminds one of the accusation levelled against Oxford and Bolingbroke by the Whigs, after Queen Anne's death. However, the most amusing satire is reserved for the party strifes that so often disturbed public life in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The description of the feuds between *Tramecksan* and *Slamecksan* is meant to satirise the bitter wranglings of the Tories and Whigs of High Church and Low Church.

".....for above seventy moons past, there have been two struggling parties in the empire, under the names of *Tramecksan* and *Slamecksan*, from the high and low heels on their shoes, by which they distinguish themselves. It is alleged indeed, that the high heels are most agreeable to our ancient constitution : but

56. *Gulliver's Travels* (ed. L. A. Landa, Methuen Publication), Part I, ch. IV, p. 37.

however this be, his Majesty hath determined to make use of only low heels in the administration of the government and all offices in the gift of the crown..... The animosities between these two parties run so high, that they will neither eat nor drink, nor talk with each other." (Part I, ch. IV)

And here is his delightful allegorical treatment of the quarrels between Catholics and Protestants. Though historical exactitude is not strictly maintained, yet reference to Henry VIII's command to break the egg at the small end, to the execution of Charles I to James II, to the Catholic France attempt to incite rebellion in the Protestant England, can hardly be missed.

"Which two mighty powers (Lilliput and Blefescu) have, as I was going to tell you, been engaged in a most obstinate war for six and thirty moons past. It began upon the following occasion. It is allowed on all hands, that the primitive way of breaking eggs before we eat them, was upon the larger end : but his present Majesty's grandfather, while he was a boy, going to eat an egg, and breaking it according to the ancient practice happened to cut one of his fingers. Whereupon the Emperor, his father published an edict, commanding all his subjects, upon great penalties, to break the smaller end of their eggs. The people so highly resented this law, that all histories tell us there have been six rebellions raised on that account ; wherein one emperor lost his life, and another his crown. The civil commotions were constantly fomented by the monarchs of Blefescu; and when they were quelled, the exiles always fled for refuge to that emire." (Part I, ch. IV)

The second voyage of Gulliver takes him to the land of the giants, in whose comparison he appears as small and insignificant as did Lilliputs before him. He is caught by a man who is "as tall as an ordinary spire-steeple" and who covers "about ten yards at every stride." Throughout the second Part, Swift never allows us to forget this scale, everything being proportionately magnified. The corn there rises at least forty feet ; the ordinary cat is "three times larger than an ox" ; the box that farmer gives his son "would have felled an European troop of horse to the earth" ; the handkerchief of the farmer's

wife is "larger and coarser than the mainsail of a man of war" ; the trotting of the horse is "equal to the rising and falling of a ship in a great storm" ; the bowl of cream at the dinner-table is large enough for Gulliver to swim in it ; and the music is so loud that Gulliver cannot stand it unless he withdraws as far back as possible, shut the doors and windows of the room, and draw the window curtains, after "which I found their music not disagreeable." There is a deliberate design in transporting the readers from the six-inches tall creatures to the land of the giants. As Kathleen Williams points out, "the satiric basis of the voyages to Lilliput and Bobdingnag is the conception known as relative size, and regarded purely as a satiric device as this is apt and successful : man is seen more clearly and with more detachment when seen from a far lower or far higher physical position."⁵⁷ Gulliver himself supplies the hint. Regarded as a quaint trick of nature, an object of fun and merriment, of curiosity and wonder, Gulliver finds himself helpless before the immense strength of Brobdingnag and reflects on the happy days when his superemacy was unquestionably accepted by Lilliputs :

"In this terrible agitation of mind I could not forbear thinking of Lilliput, whose inhabitants looked upon me as the greatest prodigy that ever appeared in the world : where I was able to draw an imperial fleet in my hand, and perform those other actions which will be recorded for ever in the chronicles of that empire.....(but in Brondingnag) what could I expect but to be a morsel in the mouth of the first among these enormous barbarians who should happen to seize me ? Undoubtedly philosophers are in the right when they tell us, that nothing is great or little otherwise than by comparison. It might have pleased fortune to let the Lilliputians find some nation, where the people were as diminutive with respect to them, as they were to me. (Part II, ch. 7)

The irony is that Gulliver, who thought himself and the race to which he belonged to be so much more civilized, rational and noble than Lilliputs, is to see man now, through the eyes Brobdingnag, as a selfish, corrupt and not so civilised creature. Indirectly and slyly, Swift decimates the image of

57. K. William, *Swift and the Age of Compromise*, p. 155.

the noble man and his civilised institutions through sharp remarks made by the King who seem baffled by the political and social behaviour of Europeans. The account of European civilizations does not inspire admiration or wonder in the King ; instead he is moved to indignation and, referring to human beings, says : "I dare engage, those creatures have their titles and distinctions of honour, they contrive little nests and burrows, that they call houses and cities, they dispute, they cheat, they betray."⁵⁸ And when Gulliver, thinking of diverting the King, narrates the account of bloody wars fought by European nations, the King, instead of being pleased, makes derogatory remarks about the very nature of man.

"He wondered to hear me talk of such chargeable and extensive wars ; that certainly we must be a quarrelsome people, or live among very bad neighbours, and that our generals must needs be richer than our kings. He asked what business we had out of our own islands, unless upon the score of trade or treaty, or to defend the coasts with our fleet. Above all, he was amazed to hear me talk of a mercenary standing army in the midst of peace, and among a free people. He said if we were governed by our own consent in the persons of our representatives, he could not imagine of whom we were afraid, or against whom we were to fight, and would hear my opinion, whether a private man's house might no better be defended by himself, his children, and family, than by a half a dozen rascals picked up at a venture in the streets, for small wages, who might get an hundred times more by cutting their throats. (Part II, ch. VI))

The innenudo of all this is that "a paid army in peace time is needed only to maintain the power of a tyrant." Similarly, when hoping to gain the King's favour, Gulliver offers to make guns for him and describes their destructive power, he is met with a contemptuous frown ; for, it must be an utterly selfish and cruel person who thinks of inventing and using such terrible engines against his own race. The King says, not the invention of guns but discoveries in art or in nature please him. And so, Gulliver is forced to conclude that the King's attitude

58. *Gulliver's Travels*, Part II, ch. III, p. 86 (Louis A. Landa edition)

towards human race is the result of 'narrow principles' and 'short views.' Henceforth he becomes sly while answering inconvenient questions. By the time, account of this voyage ends, Swift has, by comparison with Brobdingnag, shown that mankind for all their boast about their civilization, are uncivilized, uncultured and selfish creatures. What else does human history tell us ? What does the King discover in Gulliver's account of the historical progress of England ?

He was perfectly astonished with the historical account I gave him of our affairs during the last century, protesting it was only an heap of conspiracies, rebellions, murders, massacres, revolutions, banishments, the worst effects that avarice, faction, hypocrisy, perfidiousness, cruelty, rage, madness, hatred, envy, lust, malice, and ambition could produce."

And so this is Swift's catalogue of human vices ! Impressive, Indeed !

The third voyage takes our hero to the flying island of Laputa. In this section, Swift satirises the impractical scientists of his own day. The island of Laputa is, accordingly, peopled with mathematicians and scientists and Intellectuals who think "only in the realm of the abstract and the exceedingly impractical." They are all the time so lost in their thought that they need a servant to remind them of the trend of conversation. He flaps the speaker on the mouth, and hearer, on the ear, to get the dialogue resumed between them. Highly amusing and the devastatingly ironical are the projects being thought out and experimented upon there. One scientist is busy in extracting sunbeams out of cucumbers, another in reducing "human excrement to its original food," a third in getting the ground ploughed in a novel way—"in an acre of ground you bury, at six inches distance, and eight deep, a quantity of acorns, dates, chestnuts, and other mast or vegetables whereof these animals (hogs) are fondest : then you drive six hundred or more of them into the field, wherein a few days they will root up the whole ground in search of food, and make it fit for sowing, at the same time manuring it with their dung."⁵⁹ Gulliver finds an architect busy in his unique project of constructing houses in a new manner, by "beginning at the

59. *Gulliver's Travels*, Part III, ch. V, p. 146 (Landa edition)

roof and working downwards to the foundation." Then there is another scientist who is trying to extract cloth from spider's web. The language teacher believes that all *things* about which one talks are *nouns* and so, instead of damaging his health by articulating words every now and then, he believes in carrying things he wants to talk about, on his back, and to converse with others by showing them actual objects. Most humorous is the device employed by a mathematics teacher to sharpen the wits of his students. It is this :

The proposition and demonstration were fairly written on a thin wafer, with ink composed of a cephalic tincture. Thus the student was to swallow upon a fasting stomach, and for three days following, eat nothing but bread and water. As the water digested, the tincture mounted to his brain, bearing the proposition along with it.⁶⁰

Everywhere there is evidence of Swift's dislike of romantic notions and enthusiasm. The Laputans are ridiculed for their excessive love of, or obsession with music and astronomy. "Their outward garments were adorned with the figures of suns, moons, stars, interwoven with those of fiddles, flutes, harps, trumpets, guitars, harpsichords, and many more instruments of music." Their dishes too are served in mathematical or musical shapes.

MAN—THE YAHOO ?

It is in the fourth voyage of Gulliver that Swift's satire is at its most corrosive. It is a direct and ruthless attack on man's bestiality. While the satire of earlier voyages is concerned with the flaws of man's actions, the satire of the fourth voyage cuts deeper : it is, as John F. Ross says, concerned with "the inner make-up of man."⁶¹ No human vice escapes the critical gaze of the satirist, and by the time we reach the end of the narrative, we feel uneasy about the conclusion which is inescapable in the context : that man for all his faculties is an irrational creature, swayed by passions and the evils that flourish about him. He is a Yahoo-man, a beast in the disguise of man. Such a bitter and gloomy view of human nature has earned for Swift the title of the greatest misanthropist among men of letters. We would not discuss here whether such an estimate of Swift's genius is right, suffice is to say that as moral

60. Ibid., Part III, ch. V, p. 151.

61. John F. Ross, *The Final Comedy of Samuel Gulliver (Twentieth Century Views)* p, 71.

satirist, he was merciless in tearing away the false covering that hides man's real nature from view. To combat vice and corruption, Swift would rather have a direct look at man's worst part in its nakedness.

In the fourth voyage, Gulliver reaches a land inhabited by two kinds of creatures—the Houyhnhnms and the Yahoos. The former are horses, but possessing noble virtues and reason ; the latter are a race of ugly, vile, physically and morally depraved creatures who have striking physical resemblance to man. The Houyhnhnms present a sharp contrast to the Yahoos. They are beautiful and graceful in appearance, untouched by evils like greed, selfishness, malice, hatred, lust, etc., and endowed with reason, benevolence and other virtues. They are held up as a model of rational being. In all matters, not excluding marriage, child-rearing, education and social institutions, they are guided by the dictates of Reason. “As these noble Houyhnhnms are endowed by Nature with a general Disposition to all Virtues, and have no Conceptions or Ideas of what is, evil in a rational Creature ; so their grand Maxim is to cultivate Reason, and to be wholly governed by it.” Gulliver's claim that people of his own race possess Reason is disproved by his account of the most irrational actions, mankind engage in. His account of wars between kings, of battles of wits in law-courts, of mutual quarrels among men, make the master of the Houyhnhnms exclaim utter surprise about the perversity of human nature that should thus employ the great gifts of nature granted them. The point is : Reason should not be perverted as among mankind, but should be the sole guide in our actions :

“Neither is reason among them a point problematical as with us, where men can argue with plausibility on both sides of a question : but strikes you with immediate conviction , as it must needs do where it is not mingled, obscured, or discoloured by passion and interest.....

So that controversies, wranglings, evils unknown among the Houyhnhnm.”⁶²

Having shown the Houyhnhnms as perfect rational beings, Swift sets up against them the image of the Yahoo, who is later identified with man. When Gulliver first sees the Yahoo, he immediately experiences a strong aversion to him. “I never

62. *Gulliver's Travels*, Part IV, ch. VIII, p. 216 (Landa edition).

beheld in all my Travels so disagreeable an Animal, or one against which I naturally conceived so strong an Antipathy." His strong aversion is expressed in the various epithets he uses for him—the ugly monster, the beast, the abominable animal, the wild animal, the brute, etc. Gulliver receives a shock when he discovers the physical similarities between himself and the Yahoo :

"My horror and astonishment are not to be described. When I observed, in this abominable animal, a perfect human figure ; the face of it indeed was flat and broad, the nose depressed, the lips large, and the mouth wide . . . The forefeet of the Yahoo differed from my hands in nothing else but the length of the nails, the coarseness and brownness of the palms, and the hairiness on the backs. There was the same resemblance between our feet....."⁶³

The rank odour coming from the body of the Yahoo makes him most disagreeable and loathsome :

"I observed the young animal's flesh to smell very rank, and the stink was somewhat between a weasel and a fox, but much more disagreeable."

But this physical corruption and ugliness is but a manifestation of inner hideousness. The Yahoos are "the most unteachable of all animals," and this defect arises "chiefly from a perverse, restive disposition. For they are cunning, malicious, treacherous and revengeful. They are strong and hardy, but of a cowardly spirit, and by consequence isolent, object, and cruel." Their capacities fit them for no other task except to "draw or carry burthens." The satire of Swift cuts very deep when he suggests that, like physical similarities, there are moral similarities between the Yahoos and the mankind, the later being no less morally depraved and corrupt. And when this truth dawns upon Gulliver, he detests himself and his race and is deep in despair.

Swift's unrelenting castigation of human nature has raised a hornet's nest of questions about his intention. To say that he detested mankind in general and so depicted man as a Yahoo would be an over simplification. Perhaps it will be nearer truth to suggest that Swift, after the failure of his hopes of advancement in church and politics, the disappointments he suffered in his love-affairs, the bitter political wranglings and conspiracies which he saw during his political career, had come to take a dim view of human nature. He passionately believed

63. *Ibid.*, Part IV, ch. ii, p. 186.

that the only way to lift humanity from the morass of corruption into which it had fallen, was to accept Reason as our sole guide in life. Hence his insistence on the rational aspect of the Houyhnhnms' life. "Reason alone," he says, "is sufficient to govern a rational creature."

VIII. HIS LOVES

Of late, Swift's love-affairs have attracted considerable notice. That a person apparently so unemotional should have entered into relationship with three ladies, and yet not married any one of them, sounds a little mystifying. Evelyn Hardy's recent book, *The Conjured Spirit*, regarding the relationship of Swift, Stella and Vanessa is yet another proof of the interest that attaches to the his personal life. Earlier, Mr. Martin Freeman had collected and published the correspondence exchanged between Swift and Vanessa, while Mr. Harold Williams had made available Swift's letters to Stella. Mr. Irvin Ehrenpreis has included an exclusive chapter on Swift's women in his book, *The Personality of Jonathan Swift*.

The first woman in Swift's life was one Waring Jane, whom he affectionately called Varina. He might have formed an acquaintanceship with her while studying at Trinity College, Dublin, but saw more of her during his stay at Kilroot, where he had gone in 1695 to take up his clerical duties. The clergyman soon developed a passion for her and was presently beseeching her to accept a matrimonial alliance, but his over-bearing manner somewhat scared the girl. Swift was too proud to bow before the gentle sex : he always demanded submission. When Sir Temple offered to take Swift back as his secretary, in 1696, the youngman became importunate in his addresses and wrote to her a letter expressing his ardent desire to marry her :

"Impatience is the most inseparable quality of a lover.....a violent desire is little better than a distemper, and therefore men are not to blame in looking for a cure."

It is reasonable to believe that Swift's uncertain future and his own often inscrutable behaviour must have compelled Varina to think twice before accepting his proposal. She temporized ; and Swift took offence at her delay and indecision. He resigned the prebendship of Kilroot and returned to England in 1699. Later when Varina did agree, she was greeted

with a letter, containing such offensive remarks about her fortune, family, and personal beauty and such insulting questions as "no one with a grain of self-respect could accept." The stern tone of the letter reflects the bitterness that had crept in life as a result of his being jilted a few years back. He wrote :

"I declare, therefore, you will let me know if your health be otherwise than it was when you told me the doctors advised you against marriage.....Are you in a position to manage domestic affairs with an income less perhaps than £ 330 a year ? Have you such an inclination to my person and humour as to comply with my desires and way of living, and endeavour to make us both as happy as you can ?"

Inexcusable as the letter is, it reveals "the negative sides of his nature which grew in strength as his life lengthened, and like ice in the white-light days of January insidiously closed over the warm springs of affection beneath."

Swift's return to Moor Park in 1699, mark the end of the Varina episode and beginning of another. On Sir Temple's estate lived Esther Johnson (later on, Stella), a fatherless girl whose mother worked for Temple's sister. She was hardly eight when Swift saw her for the first time, in 1689. When he returned to Moor Park for the last time, he found the girl, whom he had educated and who was fourteen years younger than him grown into a beautiful woman. Irresistably he was drawn to her. He described her as "one of the most beautiful, graceful and agreeable young wamen in London." In her he found a gracefulness "somewhat more than human in every motion, word, and action," a perfect combination of "civility, freedom easiness, and sincerity." As the image of Varina receded into background, the young Esther became the object of his attention and feeling.

When Temple died in 1699, Swift was thirty-two and Esther nineteen. Swift moved to Dublin and, when Esther left her mother's home after the marriage of her younger sister, he invited her to come down to Dublin. From 1701 onwards until her death in 1728, she mostly remained in Dublin. And though Swift never went as far as to enter into a matrimonial alliance with her or to own her as a wife, she remained for the rest of her life his most dear and intimate friend, sustaining him in moments of crisis, cheering him in his moments of

depression, and lovingly looking after his comfort and happiness. Some critics believe that a secret marriage did take place, but no definite evidence of it is available.

Swift's letters to Stella (the name Swift gave to Esther) contain his views on contemporary scene and personalities besides being a valuable record of his mental and physical condition during those fateful years. In them Swift reveals some of those aspects of his nature which were generally denied to others. These letters are known as his *Journal to Stella*. In the *Journal* too, one finds those splenetic outbursts and those 'extraordinary reversals of customary behaviour' that had made Swift such a terror to others. Says Evelyn Hardy: "An informal and indiscreet chronicle of the times, and an intimate but inhibited recital of Swift's love for Stella, the *Journal* is also an unconscious revelation of its author's character. To Stella a Swift dared to reveal himself as the irascible, revengeful being whom others feared and regarded with awe. Close-locked in intimacy, they exchanged comments, criticisms and jests, not always innocent or harmless, about the great people of court and society : Stella knew and understood what agonies of suspense and repression (as a boy in Ireland and as a young man at Moor Park) had caused these violent explosions of feeling ; she accepted them without trembling, cavilling, or remonstrating, and Swift sailed into her harbour like a ship serene though dangerously crowded with sail."⁶⁴ Her death, in 1729, brought her intimate association with Swift to an end.

The third woman was Esther Vanhomrigh, known to us as Vanessa (the name given her by Swift.) The family lived in Dublin, but after her father's death in 1703, Vanessa and her mother moved to London. Swift came to know her during his political career in London. A brilliant conversationalist and a man of some public esteem, Swift must have impressed the family with his witticisms and literary qualities. Vanessa took a strong fancy for him and fondly hoped to be accepted by him as wife. But that was not to be. Swift found her lazy and indiscreet. "I have corrected all her faults ; but.....she is incorrigibly idle and lazy—thinks the world made for nothing but perpetual pleasure ; and the deity she most adores is Morpheus.....She makes me of so little consequence that it

64. Evelyn Hardy, *The Conjured Spirit*, p. 110.

almost distracts me. She will bid her sister go down-stairs before my face, for she has "some private business with the Doctor."⁶⁵ Swift might have taken the affair casually, but not so Vanessa. She never refrained from requesting, nay, menacingly imploring Swift for marriage and always reminded him of her strong passion for him. Swift's usual coldness and curtiness did not quench her love. The uneasy relationship dragged on, year after year to end only with her death in 1723. Swift's poems *Cadenus and Vanessa* recall his relationship with her.

IX. HIS LAST YEARS

By 1730 Swift had written all that was to secure for him a place in literary history. His public career was also past its prime. His *Drapier's Letters* had raised him in the eyes of Irish patriots. But in 1730's his career, political and literary, came almost to an end. His health failed him increasingly. The attacks of vertigo became more acute and more frequent. Never an optimist, he grew increasingly sour and bitter as his age advanced. Lonely and miserable in his physical and spiritual suffering, Swift passed his last years in the fastness of St. Patrick's. During the last few years of his life, he lost control of his faculties. His eye-sight failed him but he would wear glasses ; he writhed in pain on account of repeated fits of nausea and retching but would not suffer any friend or relation to witness his lacerating agony. There he lay in bed, an old, infirm man past seventy, deaf and almost unable to read books and keep control of his body. On 19th October, 1745 he died. Thus ended a remarkable life. The epitaph which he wrote himself and which was put on his tomb after his death, mirrors his nature better than anything else. It reads :

"Here is laid the body of Jonathan Swift, Doctor of Divinity, Dean of this cathedral, is buried here where fierce indignation can lacerate his heart no more. Go, traveller, and imitate if you can who strove his utmost to champion human liberty."

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65. Quoted in Ehrenpreis, *The Personality of J. Swift*, p. 19.

CHAPTER V

JONATHAN SWIFT AS A SATIRIST

It is a commonplace of criticism to speak of Jonathan Swift as one of the greatest satirist of English literature. Qualitatively and quantitatively, his satire claims for itself a place of distinction. The strong reaction that his satirical writings produced in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries critics is an indication of their disconcerting effect, for even when Thackeray and Scott are busy in denouncing the bitter tone of Swift, they are in effect acknowledging his capacity to cause tremendous uneasiness by stripping man of all his pretensions to decency and rationality.

It is only appropriate that this great satiric genius should have lived and written in the last quarter of the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century, this period being the golden age of English satire. In the second chapter of this book, we have discussed some of the reasons for the immense popularity of satire as a literary tool during the Age of Swift. Satiric measurement was then much in evidence. The critical gaze of men of letters like Pope, Defoe, Arbuthnot and Swift penetrated the outwardly glittering surface of the life of the time, to bring to view the emptiness within. The political and religious controversies that went on uninterruptedly in the seventeenth century also contributed in engendering a critical attitude which refused to take truth for granted. In fact satire is bound to flourish in an age in which the spiritual and creative energies of man lie low and values are determined by reference to a civilization that insists on good sense, on elegance in manners, in learning and literature, and in social life. In such an age the emphasis is shifted from the essence to the external, from the spiritual to the physical and material well-being, thereby creating a void between the ideal and the actual. Intellectually, one may still accept the ideal as a value-norm, and yet in practice deviate from it. Such moments in history seem to throw a challenge to human spirit ; it may either despair or boldly assert itself by casting a satiric glow on the depraved nature of the actuality and thereby making

people painfully aware of a life infinitively better and intrinsically more worthwhile than their own hollow existence and which may not be beyond their grasp if only they would put their house in order according to the dictates of Reason. When such conditions prevail, the common run of humanity may continue to hug the debased actuality, but the sensitive ones cannot fail to perceive the incompatability between the ideal and the actual. To the latter class two possible alternatives offer themselves : they may deliver a frontal, outspoken attack against the existing state of things ; or they may slyly and obliquely offer such satiric comment as would by reference to a higher morality imply condemnation of the satiric target. This—the second alternative—is precisely the method of Swift, and it gains strength and conviction because of its indirectness and at the same time appears irrefutable because of its reference to a higher morality.

1. TRADITIONAL VIEW OF SWIFT'S SATIRE

For long, Swift has suffered on account of a wrong approach to his satire. His satire is so comprehensive and the same time so astringent that old critics were hard put to account for its corrosive quality as also to explain its pessimistic tone. In all his satires, man appears as an irrational, selfish and pervert creature, ridden with dirt and all sorts of vice. How far is this view of man from the panegyric of Hamlet, who is thrown into ecstatic rapture at the sight of man ! From Hamlet's ecstasy to the Yahoo image of man is a far cry. It is therefore no surprise that traditional critics like Thackeray and Scott found it extremely difficult to let go unscathed Swift's dark, violent rhetoric against man. Not themselves having the cold courage to look at human corruptions, and aberrations they very conveniently concluded that Swift was a born misanthropist and that his personal failures in love, in church, in politics must have embittered him to such an extent as to cause him to see in human life nothing but filth and corruption. The argument was further strengthened by adducing to the disease from which Swift had the misfortune to suffer throughout his life. And though Swift lost control of his faculties only in his old age, yet by a strange logic his illness which was wrongly called and concluded as madness—was read back into his earlier satirical writings. And since *Gulliver's Travels* presents an uncomfortable picture of man, it must be deemed to be a product of a mad, diseased mind. Some critics would have us believe that

Swift grew sour and pessimistic because, after his marriage to Stella, he discovered she was his half-sister. And how, one may ask, this conclusion is arrived at ? Oh, ! it's simple, much too simple ! Only imagine Swift as Temple's natural son and Stella as Temple's natural daughter. All this is good and plausible but for one reason. It refuses to face reality and is, therefore, irrelevant.

And when the Shadow of Freud fell across literary criticism, Swift was once again a casualty. For the issue continued to be debated in the twentieth century, how could a man unless he were abnormal write such biting satires ? Once again the favourite game of witch-hunting was played. Murry averred that the key to Swift's satires lay in his sexual difficulties with Stella. Aldous Huxley did make an attempt to look for truth but ended up by concluding that Swift's hatred of the bowels lay at the centre of his satire. But this is begging the question really. Cannot one go to a step further and ask, why did he hate the bowels ? Was it an accident, or was there anything in his mental make-up that resulted in his taking such an attitude ?

II. MODERN APPROACH

Fortunately for us, and fortunately for Swift, the literary activity of the past few decades has helped put Swift in proper perspective. If he hated mankind ; if he took a dim view of history ; if he was always astringent and unsparing in his attack ; the answer to all these must be found in the artist and his works. No longer do we take his satires as 'a compensatory potency reaction.' Nor either as a projection of a diseased mind. They are to be considered as an emanation of a mind nurtured on the neo-Classical ideals of Good Sense and Reason and intensely sensitive to pretension and hypocrisy, in whatever form and field they abound.

CONTROLLING IDEAS

(i) Swift, following the neo-Classical ideals, accepted the ideal of Good Sense or Common Sense. History was there to prove that man had deviated time and again from the path of Good Sense, and whenever he did so, it brought about wars, sufferings and chaos. What was then the best safeguard against individual aberration ? How to measure the activities, the conduct, the thinking of an individual ? The answer was found in the doctrine of the Common Sense which implied the

acceptance of 'common notions' as the social norm. Henceforth the normal, the reasonable became the significant ; and whatever did not conform to accepted patterns of normal behaviour should be regarded as unsocial, unnatural, unreasonable and therefore, condemned. In Swift too we find this acceptance of and emphasis on viewing man's activity and thought in terms of the doctrine of Common Sense. Turn to his political pamphlets and we will find that he "is constantly measuring the stupidity and malfeasance of individual politicians and public figures against the good sense and decency inherent in the social body." The difference between Swift and other satirist is, that Swift, whenever he perceives violation of good sense, hits his target with all vehemence so as to floor him down with a single stroke and tear off the mask of hypocrisy.

(ii) In *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift presents man as a loathsome creature, incapable of improvement and ridden with all sorts of corruption. True, the satirist in his monumental work and elsewhere too takes a dim view of human nature. But this is not because of a love of misanthropy. As an anglican clergyman, Swift believed in the doctrine of Original Sin. Man fell from his state of perfection, the moment Adam broke the behest of the Lord. Therefore, man at his birth is not perfect. He may attain to a better state by following divine precepts ; but experience shows that man, instead of improving his faculties, allows himself to be swayed by pride, by selfish love, by avarice, by ambition and other vices. He wars, he fights, he indulges deceit, hypocrisy and violence, and falls into various corruptions. What hope is there so long as man continues to behave in an irrational manner ? Therefore, Swift's view of man and of history is rather dim. To him, history is not a record of human progress but of human degeneration, for the present man is less sane, less good, less reasonable than the past man, and unless man makes an earnest attempt through self-discipline and restraint to improve his condition. The decline in moral standards may continue until the Yahoo-man appears on the stage. However, it must not be forgotten that Swift's purpose was to satirise man in order to awaken the society to the ills and corruptions which flourish beneath the outward surface of decency and so of necessity he had to portray the dark side of life in oppressively sombre hues.

(iii) The direction of Swift's satire is to some extent determined by his acceptance of Anglican rationalism. Swift was

staunch supporter of the Established Church and accepted it as the *via media* between Roman Catholicism and Puritan Dissent. The Established religion was regarded as consistent with human reason, whereas Catholicism demanded blind faith and Puritan Dissent rested in sheer inspiration. Therefore, Swift, in his satires, strove mightily to defend his own Church and seldom spared a chance to attack Catholicism or Dissent. *A Tale of A Tub* is a remarkable defense of the position of the Established Church.

Swift's rationalism demanded that he should attack enthusiasm, whatever sphere of life it appeared in, whether literature, religion, or politics. Did not the neo-Classicalists believe in the adequacy of reason and Common sense to reveal universal truths? That being so, 'enthusiasm' was something that did not conform to the norm of reason, and was therefore regarded as manifestation of unreason. In *Some Thoughts upon the Present State of Affairs*, Swift says, "God hath given the bulk of mankind a capacity to understand reason when it is fairly offered; and by reason they would be easily be governed, if it were left to their choice." By implication, therefore, enthusiasm, which is fanciful and claims special insight, is a mere pretence and against reason. Swift shows distrust of all such activity as cannot be comprehended by reason. Consider, for instance, his bitter comments on science (see *Gulliver's Travels*, Bk. III) and imagination (*The Mechanical Operation of the Spirit*). The projectors of the Academy of Lagado engage themselves in all sorts of impractical discoveries which are obviously against Common sense. And here is his attack on imagination :

"Too intense a Contemplation is not the Business of Flesh and Blood; it must be the necessary Course of Things, in a little Time, let go its Hold, and fall into *Matter*. Lovers for the sake of Celestial Converse are but another sort of *Platonicks*, who pretend to see Stars and Heaven in Ladies Eyes, and to look or think no lower; but the same *Pit* is provided for both; and they seem a perfect Moral to the Story of that Philosopher, who, While his Thoughts and Eues were fixed upon the Constellations, found himself seduced by his *Lower Parts* into a *Ditch*."

III. SWIFT'S AIM IN WRITING SATIRE

In the Preface to *The Battle of the Books*, Swift defined

satire as "a sort of glass, wherein Beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own ; which is the chief reason for that kind of reception it meets in the world, and, that so very few are offended with it." But this is being modest, for Swift's satire has teeth to bite deep into human pretensions and follies, and to make its bite felt. Years later, when he published *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift owned that he he was actuated by a didactic aim in writing his satires. Captain Gulliver writes to his cousin : "Pray bring to your mind how often I have desired you to consider, when you insisted on the motive of public good, that the yahoos were a species of animals utterly incapable of amendment by precepts or examples, and so it hath proved ; for instead of seeing a full stop put to all abuses and corruptions, at least in this little is land, as I had reason to expect : behold, after above six month' warning, I cannot learn that my book hath produced one single effect according to mine intentions ; I desired you would let me know by a letter, when party and faction were extinguished ; judges learned and upright ; pleaders honest and modest, with some tincture of Common sense, and Smithfield blazing with pyramids of law-books ; the young nobility's education entirely changed ; the physicians banished ; the female yahoos abounding in virtue; honour, truth and good sense ; courts and levees of great ministers thoroughly weeded and swept ; wit, merit and learning rewarded.....And, it must be owned, that seven months were a sufficient time to correct every vice and folly." Swift expresses the same opinion in his defense of Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*. The satirists write because of their desire to "mend the World as far as they are able." Indeed Swift's intense moral indignation at human corruptions and depravities is the motivating force behind all his satires. While his earlier satire is less corrosive, the tone of his later satires becomes increasingly pessimistic, perhaps because by the time he wrote them, he had grown sick with watching the unchanging sepectacle of human folly.

IV. SATIRE OR INVECTIVE?

Swift claimed that his satire was aimed at no single individual ; nor was it aimed at those shortcomings the elimination of which was beyond human capacity. In one of his poems, he says :

His satire points at no defect,
But what all mortals many correct ;

For he abhorr'd that senseless tribe,
Who call it humour when they jibe.

At another place in the same poem, he says :

Yet, malice never was his aim ;
He lash'd the vice but spared the name.
No individual could resent,
Where thousands equally were meant.

In other words, Swift's satire is not motivated by a spite of mankind ; nor does it grow out of personal malice. It is calculated to call attention to the many evils that abound around us, to show their hideousness, in order to bring about their elimination from the body-politic. In as far as the aim of Swift, it is plausible and understandable. But can we accept his second contention that his satire was never aimed at individuals ? We will have to make some reservations here. A close reading of his writings will show that at many places Swift's satire degenerates into mere invective. One may notice instances of lampooning too.

While satire proper is condemnation of folly and vice by reference to some moral standard, invective and lampoon are motivated by sheer personal bitterness. To take an example, is it satire or invective when Swift describes Wharton, his political adversary, as "a Presbyterian in Politics, and an At Theist in Religion ; but he chuseth at present to whore with a Papist ?" The personal attack on Richard Bentley and William Wotton in *The Battle of the Books* is also in the nature of an invective. Referring to the former, Swift says, "Others affirmed, he had a humour to pick the worms out of the schoolmen, and swallow them fresh and fasting ; whereof some fell upon his spleen, and some climbed up into his head, the great perturbation of both." Though Swift is careful to impute this opinion of Bentley to others, but clearly enough it is his own estimate of man and is meant to decimate his public image as a learned scholar. And again, when Scaliger is made to address Bentley, he serves as a convenient mouthpiece for Swift to express his personal dislike of Bentley :

"Bentley having spoken thus, Scaliger, best-owing him a sour look, Miscreant Prater ! said he, eloquent only in thine own eyes, thou railest without wit, or truth, or discretion. The malignity of the temper perverteth nature ; thy learning makes thee more bar-

barous, thy study of humanity more inhuman ; thy converse amongst poets more grovelling, miry, and dull. All arts of civilizing others render the rude and untractable ; courts have taught the ill manners, and polite conversation hath finished thee a pedant.

This is pure and simple mischief, meant to spite the adversary. Swit falls into lampoon when he speaks of Wotton as the child begotten by an unknown father of mortal race" upon the hideous goddess of Criticism. And when the battle between the ancients and the moderns is in progress, the filthy goddess approaches Wotton and inspires him to join the fray. And how does she inspire him ? "Having spoken thus, she took the ugliest of her monsters, full glutted from her spleen, and flung it invisibly into his mouth, which, flying straight up into his head, squeezed out his eye-balls, gave him a distorted look, and half overturned his brain. Then she privately ordered two of her beloved children, Dulness and Ill-Manners, closely to attend his person in all encounters."

As Ricardo Quintana points out, Swift's roots lay in the Restoration era when lampooning was much in fashion. When confronted with his personal adversaries, Swift shows a tendency to resort to invective. His personal attacks on Bentley, on William Wotton, on Steele and Patridge, on Wharton and Nottingham, on Marlborough and the Duchess of Somerset are evidence of his tendency to lampoon his rivals. Sometimes we come across a blending of the satiric and the inventive. In *A Tale of A Tub*, he satirises human vanity that results in so much of misery and sufferings. If Swift wanted to show that wars and massacres are an extension of the false pride of Kings like Louis XIV it was all very well. But since Louis XIV happened to profess Catholicism which Swift hated, he would not allow this opportunity to go by without mounting a personal attack on the King :

"At last the vapour or spirit, which animated the hero's brain, being in perpetual circulation, seized upon that region of the human body, so renowned for furnishing the *zibeta accidentalis*, and, gathering there into a tumour, left the rest of the world for that time in peace. Of such mighty consequence it is where those exhalations fix, and so little from whence they proceed. The same spirit, which, in their superior progress,

would conquer a kingdom, descending upon the anus, conclude in a fistula."

Thus in the writings of Swift, satire is mingled with invective.

V. SATIRIC DEVICES

Swift's satire is dramatic, that is to say that Swift himself rarely appears in person in his satiric writings. And wisely so, by keeping himself in background he gives himself two advantages : (i) he safeguards himself against possible counter-attacks and at the same time such a method gives him freedom to voice his opinions freely ; (ii) the dramatic situation gives the satiric piece a completeness, and so the opinions expressed, the criticisms made, appear more plausible than would otherwise be. To secure this dramatic effect, Swift employs almost all known classical devices. He makes use of the mask, of allegory, of parody, of irony, of "discoveries, projects and machines."

(i) *Use of Mask*

T. S. Eliot, referring to the difficulties of the modern poet, speaks of the need for him to be oblique, to be indirect, to be allusive, since the material he deals with will not lend itself easily to direct treatment. One may apply this remark to Swift's satiric method also. Swift's satire, directed as it was against the whole race of mankind and all corruptions, evils, vices, and follies which afflict it, was so comprehensive and involved with such complex issues that direct method was unthinkable. To be straight-forward and openly critical would be to scare away prospective readers and to lose much of the force which satire gains by indirection. Of the many devices employed by Swift to overcome this difficulty, the most important is the use of the mask in almost all his writings. Swift, as Prof. Sutherland points out, rarely appears in person in his satiric writings; often he speaks through fictive characters or 'personae' created by him. The central fictive character not only provides a unity to the work as all the episodes described or arguments discussed, are seen through him ; but he also becomes the mouthpiece of the writer, speaking for him and being manipulated by him. Thus Swift is all the time impersonating and unless we can locate the mouthpiece through whom he speaks, we are likely to miss the import of his satire. The difficulty in determining the meaning of *Gulliver's Travels* is due precisely to the difficulty in identifying the mask which Swift has assumed in a particular situation. Are we to believe that Gulliver acts as his

mouthpiece throughout the *Travels*? If so, how are we going to solve some of the problems that crop up in interpreting the Fourth voyage? Should we take it that Swift has set up the rational but inhumanly cold Horses as a model for his fellow-beings? Or that in the last voyage, Swift has shifted his position, that he is not identifying his views with that of Gulliver, but is only cleverly manipulating him to put across his criticism of the society of his own day?

The truth is that Swift's use of the mask or mouthpiece is not so simple as some would think. Kathleen Williams speaks of Swift's manipulations as being 'too complicated and too rapidly changing to easily tabulated'⁷⁰ and hence the necessity for the reader to adjust and readjust his sight according to the changed position of the mouthpiece. Consider, for instance, the satire involved in the talks between Gulliver and the King of the Brobdingnags. Though Gulliver generally acts as the mouthpiece of the author but here the satiric implication will come home only if we look at the account of English people and history given by Gulliver through the eyes of the King. The irony of the situation demands a readjustment of the position of the reader. Throughout his conversation with the King, Gulliver is identified with the abuses which Swift means to attack and the King's anger at his horrible description of the wars, at the cruelty and inhumanity of the politicians, at the use of destructive weapons, suggests the position of the satirist:

"The King was struck with horror at the description I had given of those terrible engines, and the proposal I had made. He was amazed how so impotent and grovelling an insect as I (these were his expressions) could entertain such inhuman ideas, and in so familiar a manner as to appear wholly unmoved at all the scenes of blood and desolation, which I had painted as the common effects of these destructive machines, whereof he said some evil genius, enemy to mankind, must have been the first contriver."

But in the Third Book, we are required to readjust our position. If in the Second Book, Gulliver is identified with human abuses and follies, in the Third Book the situation is reversed. It is now Gulliver who looks askance at the spectacle of folly and

70. K. Williams, *Swift and the Age of Compromise*, p. 130.

unreason of the impractical projectors of Laputa island. Herbert Davis makes a very illuminating remark on Swift's manipulation of the mouthpiece. Says he, "In any study of the disguises or masks that Swift puts on for his particular purpose, we should do well to remember this—that the reader can and should share the true author's creative liberty. The safest image is I think that of a puppet's show, not, as Mr. Bullitt describes it, with the puppets on wires—but the real puppet-show, where we watch the actions of the puppet's as they are manipulated on the showman's fingers, and hear his voice changing its tones as it impersonates different characters." Mr. Davis cites the use of the mouthpiece in the *Drapier's Letters* to illustrate Swift's ability to employ the fictive character for heightened dramatic effect and to manipulate it variously to suit his purposes. In the First Letter, Mr. Drapier is a simple shop-keeper of St. Francis Street, Dublin and is concerned at the economic ills that the introduction of the Wood's half-pence may result in. But when he is involved in serious legal arguments, in the Third Letter, Mr. Drapier, the linen merchant, nevertheless proves himself equal to his task ; however, the propriety of the mask is maintained by making Mr. Drapier confess that he has received some assistance from an Eminent Person. Towards the end of the Third Letter, Mr. Drapier is given a new status : he is not merely a shop-keeper but a firm adversary of England, which suggestion is given by alluding to the battle between David and the giant Goliath and then identifying Drapier with David. In the Fifth Letter, Drapier assumes a new personality revealing himself as a serious student of the social and political thought, thus adding the weight of scholarship to his arguments.

From the above it is clear that the mouthpieces of Swift are not fully created independent characters. Not are they meant to be one. Swift never allows them to get out of his hand. Always conscious of the purpose of their creation, Swift is all the time manipulating them, using their antics and movements to express the opinions of their master. The puppeteer may not himself appear on the stage, but his presence behind the show and, what is more, his dexterous handling of his puppets cannot escape notice. Commenting on Swift's technique, Kathleen Williams says, "He does not hide behind his mouth-piece, but is constantly in view, manipulating it, laughing at it,

keeping us conscious that it exists only as it is created and used by him."

Swift treats his masks or mouthpieces in two ways, ironic and non-ironic. The non-ironic mask serves as a simple disguise for the writer. The views he expresses, are obviously those of its creator, and they are expressed in a direct manner. The mask of the Examiner which Swift used as a Tory journalist, or that of Drapier, or that of the Historian in the *Battle of the Books*, belong to this category. But more often the mask is ironic, that is to say that Swift creates a fictive character, an ingenu, who represents or is identified with values to which Swift is opposed. He therefore does not represent the views of Swift; rather he is anti-Swift. The ironic handling of Gulliver in Book II is a case in point.

The use of the mask does not arise from Swift's lack of confidence in himself or from his unwillingness to owe his views openly. It was an artistic need in his case. It lent itself with ease and effectiveness to ironical treatment and gave the writer ample scope to manoeuvre himself into a position to vantage to attack the shams and deceptions he hated.

(ii) Parody :

The art of parody was quite popular among the writers of the Augustan Age. Parody makes not only for satire but also "provides full scope for the play of wit and humour." Parody lies in using the conventions and manner of the original model in a totally different set of circumstances, in which process the absurdity of the situation which the satirist is dealing with or of the original model becomes patently clear. The employment of the epic machinery by Pope in *The Rape of the Lock* or by Swift in the *Battle of the Books* and the description of trivial things in a highly serious vein betrays the satiric intention of the writer. Swift is without doubt a master parodist. Sometimes he parodies a particular style or method, sometimes a particular literary genre, but in each case the choice is determined by the needs of the satire. In making short work of his adversary, the Duke of Marlborough, Swift parodied Ovid's *Fable of Midas*. In writing his numerous satires, Swift laid a considerable number of literary models under debt. If Wharton is to be criticised, let Cicero's oration against Verres be adapted with necessary modifications. "The *Windsor Prophecy* can be given the form of one of Merlin's prophecies and printed in

Black Letter to look as if it had really appeared in 1530. The Astrologer Patridge can be most effectively exposed by an imitation of his own Almanack, exploiting his own method of filling it up with dire prognostications ; and the foolish reasoning of the Free thinkers can be most fittingly demonstrated by presenting an "Argument" set down exactly in the manner of the logicians." We shall now briefly examine the use of parody in his major works.

The Battle of the Books purports to be an account of the controversy regarding the relative merits of the ancients and the moderns. The heat generated by the debate, then going on in France and England, seemed disproportionate to the issues involved. Swift wanted to show the absurdity of the whole situation. He, therefore, treated his subject in the mock-heroic manner. The epic conventions used by Homer, by Virgil, by Milton in their poems which had momentous issues of universal significance as their subjects are borrowed by Swift to narrate the battle "fought last Friday between the Ancient and the Modern Books in St. James's Library." By suggesting that the controversy was taken up by animated books, Swift is laughing in his sleeves at the passions that an academic discussion could arise. The mock-heroic technique used by Swift suits his satiric intention most perfectly, for it provides his ample opportunities to introduce into the main narratives, episodes designed to disparage the moderns who appear to him preposterous and over-enthusiastic. Consider, for example, Swift's brilliant use of the Spider and the Bee episode. The blundering of the Bee into the Spider's web is a convenient excuse to praise the ancients for their 'sweetness and light' and to pour scorn on the moderns, who, like the spider, spin their edifices out of themselves. Consider too Virgil's meeting with Dryden, or Wotton's with the goddess of Criticism, or Scaliger's castigation of Bentley. How else Swift could have achieved his satiric end of ridiculing Dryden, Wotton, Bentley and a host of other modern writers, without making the whole account appear absurd.

In *A Tale of a Tub*, Swift parodies the style and some of the practices of the seventeenth century writers. The multiplicity of prefaces, introduction, dedication, etc., that precede the main story of the *Tale*, is a delicious parody of the manners of the modern writers, of whom Dryden is the best example. Dryden loved to add introductions, apologies, dedications, pre-

fæees etc. to his plays and writings. The Author humorously remarks that the *the Tale* is written for "the Universal Improvement of Mankind," a phrase which the Royal Society loved to prefix to all its treatises irrespective of the fact whether they really were of any use to mankind. But Swift is not a writer who would take infinite pain to parody a literary manner unless it were to expose some literary pretension. In the seventeenth century, the practice of dedicating books to well-known patrons had become a universal habit, the purpose being to secure large sales by associating the work with a famous name. How can Swift resist the temptation of making it the target of his satirical attention. And so we have the book-seller addressing himself to Lord Somers to whom the book is dedicated. He confesses ignorance of the contents of the book and of its merits, but is sure that, if the name of Lord Somers is associated with it, it will sell well. "I am altogether a Stranger to the Matter ; And, tho' every body else should be equally ignorant, I do not fear the Sale of the Book, at all the worse, upon that Score. Your Lordship's Name on the Front, in Capital Letters, will at any time get off one Edition." It's a parody with a purpose !

And when one examines the style of *the Tale*, one cannot help enjoying the ease with which Swift parodies the manner of the seventeenth century writers, with the express purpose of ridiculing it. Turn to the Epistle Dedicatory which is supposed to be from the pen of the Author. One at once becomes conscious of a change in style. His sentences are a torrent of words pouring forth without check. The very first sentence runs to 160 words without a stop. What Swift is doing ? He is parodying the gushing style of Robert Burton and other seventeenth century writers who loved to meander in the labyrinth of words and could never express a plain thing plainly. Their method is seen as an extension of 'enthusiasm' in the field of writing, and since 'enthusiasm' runs counter to reason, it follows that labyrinthine writings embody meaningless soarings of an idle mind. Says Kathleen William : "The leading figures of the early eighteenth century were very much aware of their task of adaptation, Swift as much as any ; and in him, with his extraordinary sensitivity to the effect of the tone of voice in writing, style is frequently the embodiment of a particular way of thinking which is being set before us for our contemplation. The breathless, aimless eagerness of manner in so much of

A Tale of a Tub, brings before us the dangers of uncontrolled speculation, a spider-like spinning of systems and theories from our own entrails.....”

In *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift parodies the manner of the travel books to embody his greatest satire. While the matter-of-fact, simple style of the *Travels* disarms the reader, the irony that runs through the narrative acts upon him with devastating effect.

(iii) *Allegory*

Allegory is another classical device frequently used by writers who are actuated by a moral purpose. Swift used allegory in most of his satiric writing, sometimes consistently as in *A Tale of a Tub*, at other times intermittently as in *The Battle of The Books*. Swift sets up parallelism between two seats of events or ideas where one suggests and comments on the other. The animated controversy between books (in *The Battle of the Books*) is an allegorical account of the debate then going on regarding the respective merits of the ancient and modern writers. The allegory of the episode of the Spider and the Bee helps Swift make his stand clear. The moderns are identified with the Spider, while the ancients are symbolised by the Bee. The Bee collects honey and wax through his own efforts by visiting gardens and flowers ; similarly, the ancients in their writings have embodied universal truths. The modern satirists in sharp contrast to the sweetness and light of the ancients, express loathsome ideas. The Spider's web at once symbolises and comments on the nature of modern literature. It is no more than a ‘store of dirt’ enriched with ‘sweepings exhaled from below.’ Allegorically, Swift pinpoints attention on the larger issues involved in the ancient Vs moderns controversy :

“So that, in short, the question comes all to this ; whether is the nobler being of the two, that which, by a lazy contemplation of four inches round by an overweening pride which, feeding and engendering on itself, turns all into venom, producing nothing at all but flybane and a cobweb ; or that which, by an universal range, with long search, must study, true judgment, and distinction of things brings home honey and wax ?”

Allegory is still more in evidence when we turn to *A Tale of A Tub*. It was demanded by the requirements of the theme Swift's purpose was to expose corruptions in religion and in

learning. He therefore, devised the story of three brothers, Peter, Martin and Jack, allegorically standing for Catholicism, Church of England, and Puritanism, and their treatment of the coat (religion) given them by their father (God). The allegorical treatment allowed Swift ample scope to hit at what he believed to be the follies of Catholicism and of Protestantism. The inverted values of the Tubbian world are shown for what they are. It is a world where pretence and unreason dominate, and Swift's lash is most active when faced with the irrational behaviour of the Tubbian people. The three oratorical machines, the pulpit, the ladder, and the stage-itinerant, are symbols of unreason, of nonsense in religion and in learning, "the pulpit signifying dissenting enthusiasm, the ladder and the stage-itinerant the contemptible aspect of modern letters."

Gulliver's Travels is an allegorical interpretation of human nature and the situation in which man finds himself. The political allegory of the Book I needs no mention. The quarrels of the political parties, the selfish motives of the leading figures, the religious controversies of the age, are allegorically suggested and commented upon. The moral allegory of Book II places man in correct perspective. The academy of Lagado is suggestive of the Royal Society. The allegory of Book IV is both complex and comprehensive : it is a comment on human nature itself.

(iv) *Myths*

Occasionally, Swift uses 'myths' to achieve his satiric purpose. The animal myth of *Gulliver's Travels* suggests the depraved nature of man. In *A Tale of a Tub*, he creates what can be termed as the sartorial myth. The Tubbians worship the tailor because of their belief that the universe is a large suit of clothes. Man himself is seen as a Macro-Coat.

(v) *Discoveries, Projects and Machines*

Impractical and fantastic projects and machines are regarded by Swift as images of unreason, as symbols of man's aberration. He therefore introduces projects, discoveries and machines in his satire to show how often man fails to distinguish reason from unreason and is carried away by his fanciful ideas. The cool calculating tone in which these projects and machines are set forth and expounded, entices the reader into taking them seriously only to realise with added horror the trap that the satirist has sprung upon him. To take an example, in his

pamphlet, *A Modest Proposal*, Swift tricks the readers into accepting that things are to be judged by their economic utility to men, and then slyly introduces the project of fattening Irish children for market so that their parents may not regard them as a burden. The pamphlet is supposed to have been written by a Projector, who acts as a mouthpiece of the true writer. The three oratorical machines introduced in *A Tale of a Tub* are an excellent commentary on the inverted values of the Tubbian world. Whoever has an ambition to be heard in a crowd must make use of one of the three machines—the pulpit, the leader and the stage itinerant. And when they appear again in the “Digression on Madness” as the “greatest actions that have been performed in the world” we agree with the inventor of the machines that they are loved and best used by mad men, to go by the Tubbian logic. While discussing about projects and machines, one cannot help referring to the Academy at Lagado and the various projects evolved by its great scientists, each one of them a clear manifestation of the pervert nature of its inventor. The architect would like to build a house from top to bottom, and not from bottom upwards. The language-teacher would not impair his health by expanding breath ; he would rather carry burdens on his back so that he might talk by showing things and not by using their names. Then there is the scientist who for years is working on the project of extracting sunbeams from cucumber. The ironic tone of his account of the political projectors of Laputa island serves as a commentary on the inverted values of the political life of the times. Gulliver is amazed to hear them suggest the selection of persons on the basis of their wisdom and merit and also that politicians be guided by public good. His feigned amazement hints at the opposite values observed in his own country :

“In the school of political projectors I was but ill-entertained, the professors appearing in my judgment wholly out of their senses, which is a scene that never fails to make me melancholy. The unhappy people were proposing schemes for persuading monarchs to choose favourites upon the score of their wisdom, capacity and virtue ; of teaching ministers to consult the public good ; of rewarding merit, great abilities and eminent services ; of instructing princes to know their true interest by placing it on the same foundation with

that of their people ; of choosing for employment, people qualified to exercise them ; and with many other wild chimaras, that never entered before into the heart of man to conceive.....”

VI. HIS SATIRIC ART

Commenting on the satiric artistry of Swift, Herbert Davis says, “It is for his satire that swift is read, and will continue to be read.” We all agree with Davis and readily recognise Swift as one of the greatest masters of satiric art. But how precisely does he achieve his effect ? Our concern here will be an examination of the constituents of the art of Swift.

(i) *Development of Satiric Action :*

The first requisite of good art is a control on the part of the artist of his material and its arrangement in such a manner as to make clear the vision behind it. As Kathleen Williams says, “Swift’s materials and their organization, the form and content of the satires, are his response to a particular situation at a time when, within man and without, chaos constantly threatened.” His satires seem to accept the challenge of the chaos of the age. His is an effort to make the world a better place to live in by counteracting the disrupting and unsocial tendencies at work ; and this he does by showing them in a dramatic context and making us look at them and their chaotic nature through the eyes of a fully created and independent character.

This character is first presented to us in a manner as to compel an identification with it. This achieved, Swift sets him free to roam about, come across apparently strange people, and then to comment on their behaviour and traditions which are somehow seen as parallels of human conduct and practices as one actually witnesses in one’s own surroundings. The character is now allowed to express his amazement, often in ironic terms, at the curious morals and manners of the new people, contrast them with that of his own country, and in the process make a comprehensive comment on human nature and situation. Thus, Swift develops his satiric action through the character’s reactions to a new situation. This is known in criticism as dramatic development of satiric action. The advantages of organising material in this way are apparent : the satirist can preserve his impersonality and force his readers to share the shock or amazement of his character in confrontation with an unforeseen situation.

The satiric action, as revealed through the character's reactions, can take two possible courses. Either the character is "a reluctant explorer" compelled by circumstances to live among strange people, and in the process, comment on their way of life : such is the case of Gulliver, who, in each of his four journeys, meets with sudden disaster and is cast upon unknown shores. Or, the character may appear to be quite comfortable in distressing or strange circumstances, and then slowly proceed to expose the reader to the horror or the hollowness of the situation.

(ii) *Trick of Diminution*

Swift shares with his friend, Alexander Pope, the tendency to diminish the satiric target in order to make it appear ridiculous. But while Pope is always cutting down his target to a size much smaller than the normal, Swift uses this trick judiciously and at appropriate place only. When Pope mentions Queen Anne and tea in the same breath, he has successfully diminished the status of the Queen by juxtaposing her with tea. A glance at the *Rape of the Lock* will show how often and how devastatingly too Pope diminishes his target. Consider, for example, these lines :

"Whether the nymph shall break Diana's law,
Or some frail china jar receive a flaw ;
Or stain her honour or her new brocade ;
Forget her pray'rs, or miss a masquerade."

Pope lays bare the moral pretensions by suggesting that to Belinda a moral disaster and a minor social accident mean the same thing.

Swift achieves the effect of diminution by drawing a parallel between his satiric target and another object which is apparently inferior, morally and otherwise. The result is that the primary object is made to suffer the contemptibility that attaches to the second object. Consider, for example, the episode of the Spider and the Bee in the *Battle of the Books*. The spider is described in loathsome terms and made to appear disgusting and vile, and when a similarity is firmly drawn between the Spider and the modern writers, the latter suffer diminution of status :

"For, pray, gentlemen, was ever anything so modern
as the spider in his air, his turns, and his paradoxes ?
He argues in the behalf of you his brethren (moderns),

and himself with many boastings of his native stock and great genius ; that he spins and spits from himself and scorns to own any obligation or assistance from without. Then he displays to you his great skill in architecture, and improvement in the mathematics. To all this the bee, as an advocate, retained by us the ancients, thinks fit to answer ; that, if one may judge of the great genius or inventions of the moderns by what they have produced, you will hardly have countenance to bear you out, in boasting of either. Erect your schemes with as much method and skill as you please ; yet if the materials be nothing but dirt, spun out of your own entrails (the guts of modern brains) the edifice will conclude at last in a cobweb..... For anything else of genuine that the moderns may pretend to, I cannot recollect; unless it be a large vein of wrangling and satire, much of a nature and substance with the spider's poison."

(iii) *Use of Irony*

Satire in Swift exists on two levels, the overt and the implied. The overt satire wherein the satiric target is openly held up to ridicule is not very common in Swift. It is, artistically speaking, somewhat crude and direct, with the satirist being personally involved in it. The satire of Langland is of this type, the poet expressing his indignation at social and religious evils of his time in a forthright manner. Needless to say, the overt satire loses much of its efficacy precisely because of its undisguised blunt attack. Langland might have been swept off by the vehemence of his anger, but not so for those who came after him. The satires of Dryden and Pope, of Swift and Shaw, are subtle, polished and refined. Swift is the master of the implied satire. This sort of satire exists where the writer says one thing but actually means another which is often opposite to the first. Thus, while the writer is outwardly indulging in pleasant observations and remarks, he is in effect persuading the reader not to be taken in by deceptive appearances and to look beneath the surface to know the true nature of reality. Therefore, the implied satire always carries two meanings, as in Swift ; and since of the two, the significant is only implied, never stated, only hinted and never given, so when the satiric intention of the writer dawns upon the reader it always comes with a shock—the shock of realising, without being prepared for it, an unpleasant

truth of seeing folly, pretention, selfish love, corruption in most unsuspected places. The double effect of the implied satire is gained by the use of a device known as irony.

Generally speaking, irony is "expression of one's meaning by language of opposite or different tendency, especially simulated adoption of another's point of view for purpose of ridicule." Now, Swift is the greatest master of irony in English language, perhaps in any language of the world. This is not a tall claim for one who, thought Charles Whibley, might have taught a lesson in the use of irony to Voltair himself. Irony in Swift assumes many forms and operates in several ways and on several levels. One should go to his satires themselves to appreciate its complexity and effectiveness. His deft handling of this tool make it impossible for the reader to anticipate his attack, to ascertain its direction, to forestall its thrust. In *A Modest Proposal*, the tone of the argument is so calm and calculating that the reader expects to see a well-considered proposal for the well-being of the Irish parents. He hurries through the pages, and as he reads on he is shocked by the macabre proposal of fattening Irish children for the market in order to prevent them being a burden to their parents. And only when you have read through the book, you realise the irony of the title "A Modest Proposal." This is just one instance. One can quote many to support Swift's claim to be considered as the best exponent of the art of irony.

F. R. Leavis in the essay *The Irony of Swift* refers to two elements which give much of its devastating effect to his irony: (i) surprise, and (ii) the dispassionate, matter-of-fact tone. Swift's irony works mostly by surprise. His aim being to touch the conscience of the reader, to disturb his complacency, he adds the element of surprise to his irony in order to "defeat habit, to intimidate, and to demoralize." The twists and turns of the irony leaves the reader no time to defend himself, to anticipate the argument. He is forcibly carried along only to witness the gradual tearing off of the mask of decency which each one of us finds convenient to put on and is finally shamed into a recognition of his own impure motives. F. R. Leavis cites *Argument Against Abolishing Christianity* as an example of the surprising way in which Swift's irony works. Swift wanted to pour scorn on all those writers who attacked religion and to force a realization that in actual life people seldom observed christianity. He therefore starts by differentiating real and

nominal Christianity. The differentiation creates the expectation that the writer would uphold real Christianity and attack those who accept it only nominally. But surprise is in store for the reader. The writer reminds us of this 'wise and paradoxial Age' in which to defend real Christianity would be a futile attempt :

"I hope, no Reader imagines me so weak to stand up in the Defence of *real* Christianity : such as used in primitive Times (if we may believe the Authors of those Ages) to have an Influence upon Men's Belief and Actions : To offer at the Restoring of that, would indeed be a wild Project ; it would be to dig up Foundations ; to destroy at one Blow *all* the Wit, and *half* the Learning of the Kingdom, to break the entire Frame and Constitution of Things ; to ruin Trade, extinguish Arts and Sciences with the Professors of them ; in shorts, to turn our Courts, Exchanges, and Shops into Deserts.....".

This is indeed a surprising argument ! If real Christianity is restored, which will put an end to all religious controversy, then will the hack writers thrive ! The inverted logic serves as a reminder of the inverted values. Having thus disposed of real Christianity, Swift now adumbrates the grounds on which he opposes the abolition of nominal Christianity. He sets forth many vices that will break loose if such a step were taken. It would mean abolition of a sect of men who on Sundays denounce what they do on other six days ; the secretaries, now deprived of their preoccupation with religion, would turn their attention to other things and satisfy themselves by contravening the law of the land and disturbing public peace. By the time Swift comes to the end of his argument, he has not only denounced nominal Christianity implicitly but also suggested how unchristian the attitudes, motives and actions of mankind are. The reader is browbeaten into accepting his findings.

The dispassionate, matter of fact tone of his satires is also deceptive. By eliminating emotional intensity from most of his writings, Swift deepens the irony. While most of us would be cautious in accepting the views of a writer who betrays emotional intensity and is therefore likely to have been influenced by his subjective reasoning, this "automatic defense-reaction" is suspended in the company of a writer who appears dispassionate, objective, and firmly grounded in commonsense.

But soon we are involved in the unique experience of witnessing intense criticism delivered in an apparently calm tone. We are caught off our guard and compelled to view things as the writer does. *Gulliver's Travels* exemplifies the truth of this remark. Travel literature was very popular in the seventeenth century and was meant to provide entertaining reading material. In naming his greatest satire of human nature as *Travels*, Swift disarmed the reader as to the nature of the contents, and the matter-of-fact style too suggests a simple, commonplace account of things seen and heard in distant lands. But concealed in the apparently careless and unstudied style of the writer is a bitter criticism of entire human race. Moral depravities are described in the same cold manner, a trick which increases their horror. Consider, for example, Gulliver's account of his country, in Book IV. He mentions the habit among his countrymen of consuming huge quantities of wine, which makes the Master of the Houyhnhms doubt the shortage of water in England. But Gulliver soon dispels his doubt by affirming that there is plenty of water, but people drink wine which puts them out of their senses :

“That wine was not imported among us from foreign countries to supply the want of water or drinks, but because it was a sort of liquid which made us merry, by putting us out of our senses ; diverted all melancholy thoughts, begat wild extravagant imagination in the brain, raised our hopes, and banished our fears, suspended every office of reason for a time, and deprived us of the use of our limbs, until we fell into a profound sleep ; although it must be confessed, that we always awaked sick and dis-spirited, and that the use of this liquor filled us with diseases, which made our lives uncomfortable and short.

That moral depravities of this sort should be recounted as matter-of-fact-things, and not as anything deserving of serious consideration, reflects on the moral sense of Gulliver's countrymen. It also heightens the irony of the situation the reality of which comes to us with a shock of surprise.

Elsewhere too the even tone of his writing proves deceptive. Take, for instance, this account of the character of Lord Wharton. It is described in a manner that suggests a routine affair of no serious consequence. No interjection, no denuncia-

tion, no word of blame. Just a description of the man, and what a description at that.

“He seemeth to be but an ill dissembler and an ill liar, although they are the two talents he most practiseth, and most valueth himself upon. The ends he hath gained by lying appear to be more owing to the frequency, than the art of them ; his lies are sometimes detected in an hour, often in a day, and always in a week. He tells them freely in mixed companies, although he knows half of those that hear him to be his enemies, and is sure they will discover them the moment they leave him. He sweareth solemnly, he loveth and will serve you ; and your back is no sooner turned, but he tells those about him you are a dog and a rascal. He goes constantly to prayers in the of the place, and will talk bawdy and blasphemy at the Chapel door. He is a presbyterian in politics, and an atheist in religion : but he chuseth at present to whore with a papist.”

From the above passage it is clear how Swift manipulates his irony. When the element of surprise is so piquantly added to, it gains in destructive power, as we have seen above.

There is yet another form in which his irony appears. Swift always attacks his target by employing indirect methods. He simulates the view-point of the other side and, therefore, when he praises his target he is in effect pouring scorn on him. And since outwardly it is praise that is being handed out, the victim cannot refuge it ; nor can he possibly accept, because of its ironical implications. From this equivocal position Swift manages to pin down his opponent fairly easily. In *The Battle of the Books*, Swift seems to praise Richard Bentley for his bravery and adventurous spirit whereas what he actually means is that Bentley was such a fool as to think of overthrowing two great authors and that he mistook his foolishness for an act of bravery :

“The guardian of the regal library, a person of great valour, but chiefly renowned for his humanity, had been a fierce champion for the moderns ; and, in an engagement upon Parnassus, had vowed with his own hands, to knock down two of the ancient chiefs, who guarded a small pass on the superior rock ; but, endeavouring to climb up, was cruelly obstructed by his own

unhappy weight, and tendency towards his centre ; a quality to which those of the modern party are extreme subject ; for, being light-headed, they have, in speculation, a wonderful agility, and conceive nothing too high for them to mount ; but, in reducing to practice, discover a mighty pressure about their backs and their heels."

A Tale of a Tub is a classic example of the art of reducing the satiric object by offering a left-handed compliment. In the *Preface*, the Author confesses his own inability to pen a preface as suitable as the one is habitually produced by the modern writers : He, therefore, dwells upon some of the finer points of modern prefaces :

"I am sufficiently instructed in the principal Duty of a Preface, if my Genius were capable of arriving at it. Thrice have I forced my Imagination to make the Tour of my Invention, and thrice it has returned empty ; the latter having been wholly drained by the following Treatise. Not so, my more successful Brethren the *Moderns*, who will by no means let slip a Preface of Dedication, without some notable distinguishing Stroke, to surprize the Reader at the Entry, and kindle a Wonderful Expectation of what is to ensue. Such was that of a most ingenious Poet, who soliciting his Brain for something new, compared himself to the *Hangman*, and his Patron to the *Patient* : This was *Insigne, recens, indictum ore alio*. When I went thro' That necessary and noble Course of Study, I had the happiness to observe many such egregious Touches, which I shall not injure the Authors by transplanting : Because I have remarked, that nothing is so very tender as a *Modern* Piece of Wit, and which is apt to suffer so much in the Carriage."

Here is ridicule in plenty, and that to ridicule disguised as praise. What the modern writers, whom Swift detested so much, and of whom Dryden, with his multiple Prefaces, Dedications, Apologies, was the best representative, wrote was extraordinary not in quality but in its deviation from the normal.

Similarly, when Swift describes the Aeolist sect (*A Tale of a Tub*) and their practices he writes in the mock-laudatory vein. "The Learned Aeolists" we are told, have certain maxims "of

much weight." They believe 'the Original Cause of all things to be Wind' and affirm 'the Gift of Belching, to be the noblest Act of a Rational Creature.' And then come these lines in which the writer explaines the philosophy of the Learned Aeolists: "Words are but Wind ; and Learning is nothing but Words ; Ergo, Learning is nothing but Wind. For this Reason, the Philosophers among them, did in their Schools, deliver to their Pupils, all their Doctrines and Opinions by *Eructation*, where in they had acquired a wonder Eloquence, and of incredible Variety."

Irony runs through those passages in which Swift appears to blame or disparage a person or thing. In such passages the irony works the other way round. If a person or a thing is unfavourably viewed, it is not because it is intrinsically worthless. Rather his virtues are such as are seldom appreciated in this corruption-ridden world. In *A Tale of a Tub*, the Book-seller seeks permission of Lord Somers to dedicate the book to him, but also expresses his concern that Lord Somers possesses only such virtues as "Wit, and Eloquence, and Learning, and Wisdom, and Justice, and Politeness, and Candor....." These virtues are not modern, not new and novel, which is what the modern age looks for. But all the same the Book-seller will not mind taking the risk of dedicating the book to him if "Your Lordship's Name on the Front, in Capital Letters, will at any time get off one Edition." Here the satiric target is not Lord Somers or his virtues, rather the Tubbian values of a mad world where books are purchased not for their contents, but for their Dedications.

This trick of simulating the view-point of a corrupt society and expressing dissatisfaction with those who fail to understand and appreciate its traditions and see them only as vile and loathsome, presumably because of their own ignorance or shortsightedness, is used to great effect in *Gulliver's Travels*. Gulliver, who loves his country so dearly and loses no opportunity to remind us of this enduring passion, thinks of diverting the King of Brobdingnag with an account of his great country. Hoping to create a lasting impression on the King, he tells him of the great bloody wars raged by his country ; of large armies which the Kings maintain even in peace-time, of fire-belching cannons, of the Parliamentary system, of the management of treasury and other matters. But instead of admiring his country and its

institution, the King upbraids Gulliver for telling him filthy things :

“The King was struck with horror at the description I had given of those terrible engines (cannons), and the proposal I had made. He was amazed how so impotent and grovelling an insect as I (these were his expressions) could entertain such inhuman ideas and in so familiar a manner as to appear wholly unmoved at all the scenes of blood and desolation, which I had painted as the common effects of those destructive machines.”

And here is Gulliver’s commentary as to why the King failed to understand the traditions of England. Not that they were really so loathsome as the King thought them to be ; “a strange effect of narrow principles and short views.” The King might be venerable, but he does not have the common knowledge which every European has :

“.....but I take this defect among them to have risen from their ignorance, by not having hitherto reduced politics into a science, as the more acute wits of Europe have done, For I remember very well, in a discourse one day with the King, when I happened to say there were several thousand books among us written upon the art of government, it gave him (directly contrary to my intention) a very mean opinion of our understandings. He professed both to abominate and despise all mystery, refinement, and intrigue, either in a prince or a minister. He could not tell what I meant by secrets of state, where an enemy or some rival nation were not in the case. He confined the knowledge of governing within very narrow bounds ; to commonsense and reason, to justice and lenity, to the speedy determination of civil and criminal cause.....”

Here Gulliver is simulating the view-point of the corrupt European society and as their spokesman attributes the King’s inability to see any good in their political plots and counter-plots, extensive wars, etc., to his lack of knowledge. Ostensibly the King is blamed, but the sharp edge of irony cuts the other way round exposes the hollow values of the Yahoo-society of Europe.

The play of irony can be seen in other forms also. His ironic

remarks, observations, titles of books, and the interplay of ironic logic all bear witness to his awareness of the inverted values which he assailed throughout his life. The title *The Battle of the Books* is ironic, because Swift sees the controversy regarding the merits of the ancient and modern as trivial. One of his books is given the high sounding title " *Compleat Collection of Genteel and Ingenious Conversation.*" But the conversations recorded are neither genteel nor ingenious. They are platitudes which one could hear at every place, at every hour, in season and out of season, in the seventeenth century English society. Let us hear the conversation going on between some of his characters :

LADY ANSWERALL. Pray, my Lord, did you walk through the Park in the rain ?

LORD SPARKISH. Yes, Madam, we were neither sugar nor salt, we were not afraid the rain would melt us. He, he, he.

COLONEL. It rain'd, and the sun shone at the same time.

NEVEROUT. Why, the devil was beating his wife behind the door with a shoulder of mutton.

No comment from the satirist is called for. This is the gentle conversation, the platitudes repeated without any meaning or conviction. One is reminded of Swift's ironic *A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed*. In it, Swift demolishes all romantic conception of love and the fair sex by taking us inside the bed-room of a Drury-lane prostitute who is ironically referred to as "a beautiful young nymph."

To conclude then, Swift's use of irony is subtle and at the same time masterly. It enables him to express his criticisms, to deliver his intensities, in the most telling manner without the need of personal involvement. It gives satiric writings their peculiar character. Irony before Swift was so sparingly used, particularly in prose writings, that he can be said to have invented and brought it to perfection. Professor Sutherland in his book, *English Satire*, pays a richly deserved encomium to the satiric art of Swift and says that irony was his unique contribution to English literature. One agrees with him, as one agrees with the following opinion which Swift expressed about his own satire :

"Arbhthnot is no more my friend ;
He dares to irony pretend ;

Which I was born to introduce,
Refin'd it first and shew' its use."

VII. IMPORTANT SATIRIC WORKS—THEIR THEMES AND CLASSIFICATION

Among the important satires of Swift one can include *Gulliver's Travels*, *A Tale of a Tub*, *The Battle of the Books*, *A Modest Proposal*, *Argument Against Abolishing Christianity*, and the *Drapier's Letters*. All these writings show an intense awareness of evil and the various forms it can assume. Also from an examination of these works there emerge certain themes which are often the targets of Swift's satire. Pretension, enthusiasm, sham ideas and fanciful projects, corruption of language and in the sphere of religion, moral depravity—these are some of the manifestations of evil, of unreason, as Swift sees it. Turn wherever he may, he is confronted with human vices and follies, perversity and corruption. The little reason allowed to man is not being used to ameliorate the lot of the common humanity but to invent new tricks of deception to achieve selfish aims. Wars and feuds, political schemings and plots, religious quarrels and pretensions, selfishness, greed, deflated ambitions, misguided learning, all these are seen as the sure signs of a world guided not by reason but by perverse values. The world which Swift presents in his satires is a world gone mad.

Religious corruption is one of the main targets of his attack. His brilliant, if at times irreverant, commentary in *A Tale of a Tub* on what he considered to be the irrational attitude of Roman Catholics and Dissenters is unforgettable both for the sharpness of attack and the sheer force of indignation. Peter, who represents Catholicism, is not satisfied with the unadorned coat (religion) given him by the father. He adorns it with all sorts of ornaments to make it appear more attractive. By stretching this logic to extreme limits, Swift satirises effectively the attitude which mistakes the surface for the essence, which will not accept anything in its unadorned purity but must defile it by insisting on outward attractiveness. To such persons the tailor, who makes new fashions in clothes, is a deity and man himself a macro-coat. By employing the image of sartorism, Swift is exposing pretence in religion. He falls foul with gusto of all those who would interpret religion in terms of inspiration. Truth must be common to all, and those who claim special insight into religion by virtue of inspiration are viewed as victims

of an aberration. They are satirised as the Aeolists in the *Tale*. *Argument Against Abolishing Christianity* is a powerful piece of writing against those who are Christians only in name, not in spirit. In an ironic manner the writer suggests that he will not waste his energy in defending real Christianity because it has become ineffective with the present age and goes on to give certain arguments for maintaining Christianity. The apparent absurdity and non-religious character of the arguments given, jar us into a realisation of the corruptions flourishing in church and the lukewarm attitude of people generally towards religion. He defends it on grounds of pure expediency : religion provides a fine subject for the scholars to practice their wits on, it keeps quite some people busy who otherwise will indulge in violating law of the land and create problems for the State. Nothing could be more galling than this exercise in ironic logic.

Corruption of language and a vain show of scholarship are also seen as images of pretence. One remembers his brilliant parody of the style of seventeenth century writers in *A Tale of a Tub* satirising the habit of using words without having anything much to say. The meaningless ceremonial use of language is satirised in Book I of *Gulliver's Travels*. One cannot miss the intention of the writer when the six inches high Emperor of Lilliput is described in pompous phraseology : "Most mighty Emperor of Lilliput, delight and terror of the universe, whose dominion extend five thousand blustrugs (about twelve miles in circumference) to the extremities of the globe taller than the sons of men, whose feet press down to the centre, and whose head strikes against the sun." This is nothing but misuse of the noble gift of language given primarily for communication of thought. But then there are people who, like the Aeolists in *A Tale of a Tub*, take words as nothing "but wind." Listen to the conversation of the characters of "*Compleat Collection of Gentle and Ingenious Conversation*" to realise the utter futility and meaninglessness of what passes in social circles as genteel conversation. Neither do the jargons of the lawyers, of astrologers, of doctors and pedants escape the critical gaze of the Dean. In *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift hits out at the lawyers for having developed "a peculiar cant and jargon of their own, that no other mortal can understand, and wherein all laws are written, which they take special care to multiply ; whereby they have wholly confounded the very essence of truth

and falsehood, of right and wrong," the result being that laws are more often made instrument of injustice than justice. Vain scholarship and pedantry are ridiculed in *The Battle of the Books*.

Wars and their horror occupy a prominent place in Swift's satire. Their description in lurid details and an almost coldly inhuman tone bear testimony to the writer's condemnatory attitude. Wars are the result of the selfishness and love of power among kings and emperors. In Book II and IV of the *Gulliver's Travels* and the pamphlets written to support the peace of the Tory Government there are many references to the inhumanity of those who wage wars at the cost of common humanity. To support the argument, one may quote the severe rebuke administered to Gulliver by the King of Brobdingnag for narrating blood-curdling account of destructive wars. Or, consider the following catalogue of the usual causes of war :

"He asked me what were the usual causes or motives that made one country go to war with another. I answered they were innumerable, but I should only mention a few of the chief. Sometimes the ambition of princes, who never think they have land or people enough to govern : sometimes the corruption of ministers, who engage their master in a war in order to stifle or divert the clamour of the subjects against their evil administration. Difference in opinions hath cost many millions of lives : for instance, whether flesh be bread, or bread be flesh : whether the juice of a certain berry be blood or wine ; whether whistling be a vice or a virtue ; whether it be better to kiss a post, or throw it into the fire ; what is best colour for a coat, whether black, white, red, or grey ; and whether it should be long or short, narrow or wide, dirty or clean, with many more. Neither are any wars so furious and bloody, or of so long continuance, as those occasioned by difference in opinion, especially if it bein things indifferent."

The innuendo of all this is that wars stem from human perversity and unreason.

Politicians, their petty ambitions and mean tricks, are denounced with no less severity. Indeed, as Swift sees it, most of the evils and miseries are the result of the mechiavellian moves of unscrupulous politicians.

"He was perfectly astonished with the historical

account I gave him of our affairs during the last century, protesting it was only a heap of conspiracies, rebellions, murders, massacres, revolutions, banishments, the very worst effects that avarice, faction, hypocrisy, perfidiousness, cruelty, rage, madness, hatred, envy, lust, malice, or ambition could produce."

The qualities of the chief minister, as described in *Gulliver's Travels*, are : incapacity to feel joy, love or pity, always to nurse a violent "desire of wealth, power and titles, and never to speak truth and never to honour his words. Swift had the opportunity to see the political game from inside and whatever he writes is largely true, even if it be an exaggerated and highly coloured account of political evils. The three methods used by the politicians to rise to the highest office of the land are a sad comment on human motives : "the first is, by knowing how with prudence to dispose of a wife, a daughter, or a sister : the second, by betraying or undermining his predecessor : and the third is, by a furious zeal in public assemblies against the corruptions of the court."

The political quarrels are laughed at in the political pamphlets and the First Book of *Gulliver's Travels*. The two political parties of Lilliput, Tramecksan and Slamecksan, are locked in unceasing struggle for power. "The animosities between these two parties run so high, that they will neither eat nor drink, nor talk with each other."

Swift's distrust of science and imagination is all too well known. He might have been a little uncharitable in his attitude to science in general, but his criticism of those who run after fanciful impractical projects was based on sound commonsense. The description of the Academy of Lagado and of the highly improbable projects of its scientists is characteristic of Swift. In his own half-humourous and half-ironical way he questions the validity of the pursuits of the novel and the fanciful when the whole effort is not likely to bring in any tangible result or do good to society. Indeed Swift very much suspected the professed aims of the scientists of the Royal Society and considered their commonly repeated phrase "for the universal improvement of mankind" as no more than a convenient excuse to justify their pursuit of what he considered to be wild ideas. Characteristic of his attitude is this description of the 'ingenius architect' of Lagado :

There was a most ingenious architect who had contrived a new method for building houses, by beginning at the roof, and working downwards to the foundation, which he justified to me by the like practice of those two prudent insects, the bee and the spider.

Critics and scholars have been loud in protesting against Swift's frequent use of excremental imagery. That Swift was obsessed with "the unclean flesh, the dung, the stench, the filth of man's body" is beyond doubt, but the need of criticism is to explain the motive behind persistent reference to excremental functions of human body and to physical grossness and filth generally. Gulliver is quick to notice the offensive odour coming from the bodies of the dirty Yahoos and also their unclean habits. Some of the modern critics have applied their mind to the understanding of this aspect of the satire of Swift and the clues given by them go a long way to explain the significance of the excremental imagery as seen in his works. The image of filth and excrement is the climatic image of evil and serves to emphasise the fallen nature of man. Physical depravity becomes the symbol of inner corruption.

For the purpose of classification, Swift's satires can be arranged under three heads : literary satires, political satires, and moral satires. *The Battle of the Books* and *A Tale of a Tub* fall under the first head since they attack pedantry and literary affectation. In *A Tale of a Tub*, Swift repudiates the manner and method of the seventeenth century writers by parodying their style. His political satires are concerned mainly with exposing the follies and selfishness of the statesmen and to ridicule petty quarrels among the opposing political parties. To this category belong the *Examiner Papers*, *The Contests and Dissensions*, *The Sentiments of a Church-of-England-Man with Respect to Religion and Government*, *Project for the Advancement of Religion*, *A Letter from a Member of the House of Commons of Ireland*, the *Drapier Letters*, *A Short Character of his Excellency Thomas Earl of Wharton*, etc. His moral satires offer a commentary on the the depraved human nature, the pretension, selfishness, greed, pride and petty ambitions of man. He glances at the corruption prevailing in religious and social spheres and everywhere finds evidence of man having deserted the path of virtue and of reason, and instead being guided by his sinful desires. In *A Tale of a Tub* he satirises corruption in religion, while *Gulliver's Travels* is a comprehensive satire of human nature.

As is clear from the above account, Swift is the greatest English satirist. To his mastery of the ironic logic he combined an effective use of other satiric devices to produce some of the most powerful satires of all times. His own lines best describe his satiric genius :

“As with a moral View design'd
To cure the Vices of Mankind :
His Vein, ironically grave,
Expos'd the Fool, and lash'd the Knav.”

—Verses of the Death of Dr. Swift.

CHAPTER VI

THE PROSE STYLE OF SWIFT

I. EVOLUTION OF PLAIN PROSE

The Augastan age is the formative period of modern English prose. It was during this period that prose developed as an efficient and adequate medium of expression in the hands of writers like Addison, Defoe, Steele and Swift. These writers were quick to sense the need of evolving a prose style simple and direct and easily comprehensible to the middle classes (which constituted the majority of reading public) and at the same time flexible enough to adapt itself to the needs of the subject. The writers who expressed themselves in prose before the Augustan era, wrote not for the purpose of communicating with the common man ; their writings were directed at a specialised class of men of education and taste. Their aim was not so much to establish an intimate rapport between themselves and the common reader as to distinguish themselves as highly cultivated writers by using pompous latinised diction, mannered expressions, figures of speech and the various devices used by ancient writers to achieve rhetorical effect. Milton, Hooker, Burton and Thomas Browne, all wrote in a style characterised by a passionate energy, ornateness and cadence, but it was all the same too high pitched and too unfamiliar to be used for describing the normal everyday life. The fervour that informs the style of *Aeropagética* and the sonorous quality of *Urn Burial* might not appear out of place while reading Milton and Browne, but would certainly be absurd if employed to describe drawing-room scene or in setting forth a political argument. The rise of journalism and the phenomenal growth of middle classes in the latter half of the seventeenth century necessitated the evolution of a prose style devoid of all mannerism and affectations and very near to the language of the common man. The Royal Society (1660), realising the urgency of a direct style for scientific treatises, had also demanded of its members a naked and clear expression. The awareness of infusing realism both in theme and manner of writing became increasingly urgent as the seventeenth century

drew to a close, and by the time it reached its end, the prose writers had succeeded in bringing to perfection a new style, free from turgidity and ornament and clear and concise. Though many writers, notably Bacon, Defoe, Addison and Steele, helped in the formation of the new style, yet its most powerful champion and exponent was Swift. He may lack the smoothness and the sparkle of Congreve, but he has no equal in clearness and conciseness of expression. His prose is like a lucid stream of water, nothing muddy or unclear. It will not be an exaggeration to say that by both precept and practice, Swift showed the way to a direct style and made it impossible for others to return to the passionate and stylized prose of the early prose writers.

II. STYLE REFLECTS THE PERSONALITY

The style of a writer is not merely a matter of choosing and arranging words to give an external form to the thought that grows and takes shape in the mind. It is not merely a technical device, superimposed or added to the plain thought, not something that exists outside the writer. The concept of style goes beyond this. Properly speaking it is determined and shaped by the intellectual and spiritual energy of the author and is, therefore, to be regarded as an expression of his personality. That is what the oft-quoted definition of style by Buffon means ; 'Le style, c'est l'homme même ! (Style, it is the man himself). The lofty style of Milton is expressive of his elevated thinking and deeply spiritual nature. It would have been impossible for him to write in the plain, smooth manner of an Addison. In the same way, the style of Swift reflects the man. Swift shares with other neo-classicists a hatred of affected way of writing which offends Reason and commonsense. He had little patience with those who use words copiously but without meaning much, thus obstructing rather than facilitating communication of thought. The tenets of classicism, which Swift firmly adhered to, demanded a clear and direct style, as the emotional prose was regarded as an aberration. In *On Corruption in Style*, Swift shows himself on the side of direct and simple style, for is not "simplicity which is the best and truest ornament of most things in life," most desirable in writing ? If the writer's purpose is to embody truths of nature in his words, the plainer the expression the nearer to truth will be his writing. Again, Swift shows his classicism in his condemnation of the emotional use of language and in his attack on pedantic, obscure expressions. The *Letter*

To a Young Clergyman contains some observation on style which invite careful attention. Of what use is a language that employs pedantic and abstruse expressions that fall flat on the hearer or reader? It is the pretentious nature of man misusing words to give vent to its vanity. Swift, therefore, advises the young clergy to guard against obscure, far-fetched, unfamiliar words that produce no effect to the audience. He frowns upon the divines who would use words like *omniscience*, *omnipresence*, *ubiquity*, *attribute* *beautific* *vision*, etc., to make a show of their learning. Swift, on the contrary, stands for a direct and functional language. To the young clergyman he writes :

“A plain convincing reason may possibly operate upon the mind both of a learned and ignorant hearer as long as they live, and will edify a thousand times more than the art of wetting the handkerchiefs of a whole congregation, if you were sure to attain it.”

In his own writing, Swift never takes the risk of losing immediate effect on the reader by indulging in a display of “learning or oratory or politeness.” Legend has it that, to ensure immediate comprehensibility of his writings, Swift used to read them to his servant and from his reaction would measure his success as a writer. What Swift says of good writing in general, is especially true in his own case : “Proper words in proper places.” There is no false step. Every word is in its place and is so used as to yield the maximum meaning. Truly, Swift is a prose genius who knew how to create the desired effect with simple and familiar words.

III. USE OF SIMPLE, FAMILIAR WORDS

If one is required to use only a single epithet to describe Swift’s style, one would unhesitatingly say, ‘simple.’ His simplicity is the result of much effort. It does not arise from a lack of complex thought-content, as his satire is very subtle, complex and comprehensive ; it is achieved by two ways : first, the use of familiar, simple words which at once communicate thought-content and make for easy comprehensibility, no matter how complex or difficult the thought itself is. One may read Swift from cover to cover without having recourse to a dictionary or without being required to puzzle out the meaning of words, except where he deliberately parodies the style of other writers, as in *A Tale of A Tub*, to ridicule them. He eschews all neologisms and high-sounding words. He frowns upon the

literary fashion of introducing fanciful, novel words into the language. In *The Proposal for Correcting the English Tongue*, he says : "T'is manifest, that all new, affected modes of speech whether borrowed from the court, the town, or the theatre, are the first perishing parts in any language, and, as I could prove by many hundred instances, have been so in ours."

IV. SIMPLE SENTENCE CONSTRUCTION

Secondly, this simplicity is secured by using a sentence-construction which is direct and simple, never involved. In the periodic sentences used by Milton, Hooker and Browne the meaning is not clear until the reader has reached the last clause. In Swift the construction of sentences, which are strung together rather loosely, is such that the meaning is given with each clause, with each sentence, and not held over till the last clause. This enables the reader to grasp the intention of the author as he reads along. True, here and there we may find instances where Swift does not put a stop as we may do ; but this does not spoil the fundamental quality of his style. Almost always the words are arranged in their natural order which gives the impression of artlessness. And when we remember how difficult it is to achieve this effect of naturalness we will have realised the greatness of Swift's achievement. Herbert Read praises Swift for never deserting this naturalness and simplicity even when his theme is of a complex nature. "However widely his vision might extend, however deep his insight, his mode of expression remained simple, and single, and clearly comprehensible." Here are a few quotations from his works to illustrate the truth of this observation :

(1) My father had a small estate in Nottinghamshire ; I was the third of five sons. He sent me to Emanuel College in Cambridge, at fourteen years old, where I resided three years and applied myself close to my studies : but the charge of maintaining me (although I had a very scanty allowance) being too great for a narrow fortune, I was bound apprentice to Mr. James Bates, an eminent surgeon in London, with whom I continued four years; and my father now and then sending me small sums of money, I laid them out in learning navigation, and other parts of mathematics, useful to those who intend to travel as I always believed it would be some time or other my fortune to do.

(*Gulliver's Travels*)

(2) I have brought here a Man before you, my Lords, who is a Robber of the Public Treasure ; an overturner of Law and Justice ; and the Disgrace, as well as Destruction of the Sicilian Province.....

(from *Examiner*)

(3) Were not the People of Ireland born as free as those of England ? how have they forfeited their Freedom ? Is not their *Parliament* as fair a *Representative* of the *People*, as that of England ? And hath not their Privy Council as great, or a greater share in the Administration of Public Affairs ? Are they not Subject of the same King ? Does not the same sun shine over them ? And have they not the same *God* for their Protector ? Am I a *Free-man* in *England*, and do I become a *slave* in six Hours, by crossing the Channel ?

Compare the prose of Swift with the highly emotional, poetic and mannered prose of Browne or Milton and then shall we know what a sea-change prose has undergone in the hands of the Dean.

V. ABSENCE OF METAPHORS

This simplicity is also due to his aviodance of the use of metaphors and figures of speech considered as ornaments and added to plain language to enhance its picturesque quality. Metaphors and images may lend colour and variety to the style of a writer, but they also come in the way of direct and logical statement or narration. This is all the more true in the case of those who make copious and consistent use of these devices. Swift is one of those writers who scrupulously cut out all metaphors and poetic expressions. "The rogue," said Dr. Johnson, "never hazards a metaphor." Not that Swift never uses a metaphorical expression. He does, when by doing so, he can state his point more forcefully and more effectively, but he never employs a metaphor for the purpose of embellishing his language or as a matter of literary habit. The result is a remarkable severity. Almost always Swift's style is bare and naked, direct and unadorned.

VI. CLARITY & PRECISION

With simplicity and bareness of expression goes the clarity of his language. It will be difficult to name another writer in English language who is as lucid and clear as Swift. He is never obscure or incomprehensible, never ambiguous or vague. And

how does he achieve this ? Well, in the first place he steers clear of verbal profusions, rhetorical flourishes and indulgence of emotions which may cloud the expression. Secondly, he always aims at precision of expression. And this clarity of language reveals clarity of thinking. In the *Letter to a Young Clergyman*, he emphasises the need to be clear in thought to achieve lucidity in expression :

“When a Man’s Thoughts are clear, the properest words will generally offer themselves first ; and his own Judgement will direct him in what order to place them, so as they may be best understood.”

Expressing himself on this quality of Swift’s style, Halliday says, “The outstanding feature of Swift’s prose style is clarity..... There is nothing superfluous : there are no imaginative flights, no soarings into the infinite, no raptures of idealism, no fine frenzies of passion: there is just clarity.” One can quote passages after passages from his works to show his clarity. Here are some examples :

(1) “We have been principals when we ought to have been auxiliaries : we have fought where we ought not, and we have abstained where our interests were at stake : we have allowed those allies, who charge us with deserting them, to be false to every engagement made with us. We have persevered, until we lie under the burden of fifty millions of debt. We have gained victories, which have brought to us nothing but barren renown.”

(The *Conduct of the Allies*)

(2) “.....The King’s Prerogative is bounded and limited by the Good and Welfare of his People.”

(Drapier’s Letters)

(2) “the very maxims set up to direct modern education are enough to destroy all the seeds of knowledge, honour, wisdom, and virtue among us. The current opinion prevails, that the study of Greek and Latin is loss of time; that public schools, by mingling the sons of noblemen with those of the vulgar, engage the former in bad company ; that whipping breaks the spirits of lads well born ; that universities make young men pedants ; that to dance, fence, speak French, and know how to behave yourself among great persons of both sexes, comprehends the whole duty of a gentleman.

VII. CONCISENESS

Next we shall consider his conciseness, a quality which has been universally admired. Herbert Davis says that "Swift is a master of conciseness, unequalled and unmistakable by reason of that quality alone, which gives a flavour as of salt to all his work, and preserves it from certain levels of dullness, banality, or mere impoverishment of style liable to appear in the writings of all his contemporaries." His training as a political journalist had taught him to be rigourously functional and to gain the maximum effect by expressing himself precisely and concisely. At times he does give the impression of leaving out something unsaid, but this he does intentionally to heighten the irony of his writing. Instead of dilating while engaged in a argument he scores the point by employing sharp and concentrated expressions. Consider, for example, this extract from one of his Irish pamphlets. Through conciseness he gains his effect, to rouse the Irish people into a realisation of their misery :

"The Scripture tells us, that Oppression makes a wise Man mad ; therefore, consequently speaking, the Reason why some Men are not mad, is because they are not wise : However, it were to be wished that Oppression would, in Time, teach a little Wisdom to Fools."

Or take the following account of the hypocrisy of lawyers, from *Gulliver's Travels* :

"I said there was a society of men among us, bred up from their youth in the art of proving by words multiplied for the purpose, that white is black, and black is white according as they are paid. To this society all the rest of the people are slaves."

Notice the utmost economy of words. Not a single word is out of place or superfluous. And, more importantly, each word only contributes to the building up of the total impression but also suggests a lot that has not been explicitly mentioned. The impure motives of the lawyers, their greed of money, their selfishness, the arbitrary dispensation of justice—all these are suggested though not actually described.

VIII. USE OF DETAILS

Another thing that deserves to be noticed in any discussion of Swift's style is his amassing of details. Here he was influenced

by Daniel Defoe and from him he must have learnt the art of accumulating factual details in order to give an air of verisimilitude to his setting, so as to make an improbable story like *Gulliver's Travels* appear plausible. Here Swift's inventive power is seen at its best. Whether one is in the land of the Lilliputians or of the Brobdingnagians or in the flying island of Laputa, the author takes care to make his account convincing by piling up a formidable data regarding the place, its vegetation, its cities and buildings, its fields and vistas, its people and their customs, and the vividness with which every detail is given, persuades the reader to accept the account given. When Gulliver visits Lilliput, he is depicted as a giant in the land of the tiny people. Thereafter whenever the author provides the details of the people of Lilliput, their implements and arms, their buildings and palaces, the scale emphasising the littleness of Lilliputians is always observed. Likewise, when Gulliver himself becomes a tiny creature in the land of the Brobdingnagians, everything is proportionately magnified, and again and again the scale is repeated to force conviction.

IX. DISPASSIONATE TONE

And can we forget the matter-of-fact, impartial tone of his writing. Swift is seldom passionate or declamatory. He always appears to be giving an objective account, such is the impression he creates by his way of writing. In fact this calmly objective tone suits his satiric purpose admirably. By appearing to be merely describing what he sees, Swift magnifies the horror of the evil which is his satiric target. Let us take an instance to illustrate this point. Swift wants to condemn the excessive drinking habit of his countrymen. And he does so more effectively by making Gulliver explain to the Master of the Horses in a most objective manner as to why his conutrymen are so fond of liquor :

“That wine was not imported among us from foreign countries to supply the want of water or other drinks, but because it was a sort of liquid which made us merry, by putting us out of our senses ; diverted all melancholy thoughts, begat wild extravagant imaginations in the brain, raised our hopes, and banished our fears, suspended every office of reason for a time, and deprived us of the use of our limbs, until we fell into a profound sleep.”

The best example of his matter-of-fact tone is his *Modest Proposal*, in which an economist very calmly suggests that the Irish children should be fattened and killed for market in order to avoid their being a burden to their parents. Of course, the aim is to shock the Irish people into a realization of their extreme poverty due to their helpless dependence upon England and of their inability to give the children a decent life.

X. IRONY

Irony, which is the single most important ingredient of Swift's style, we shall discuss elsewhere in the book. Here it will be suffice to say that Swift was the greatest master of ironical statement and much of the affect of his satire, often disconcerting and devastating, is due to his deft handling of irony.

From the above account it is clear that Swift is one of the most significant prose writers in English. The simplicity, directness and lucidity of his style will be the envy of all those who aspire to be among the front ranks of prose writers.

CHAPTER VII

WIT, HUMOUR AND SARCASM IN SWIFT

Though the avowed aim of Swift was to "vex the world" by satirising human follies and weaknesses, but his satires are not unrelieved exercises in cynicism. They are shot through with flashes of wit and humour which divert the reader and add spice to the writing. Herbert Davis claims for Swift a place with Rebalaïs and Cervantes, the two great continental humourists who wrote with the similar aim of laughing men out of their folly. Of course, Swift is not so witty as Congreve and Oscar Wilde ; nor is his humour so pervasive as is Chaucer's, or broad as is Dickens's. Yet humour, however subdued, is always present in his works.

The unmistakable comic sense of Swift was quick to seize on human incongruities and absurdities, from whence arises humour. Sometimes this comic sense expresees itself in the playful satire of the *Bickerstaff Papers*, while at other times, as in *Gulliver's Travels*, it is unobtrusively present in the irony of the situation, or in the juxtaposition of disparate things. When Gulliver is actually among the Yahoos we are somewhat unsettled by the sharpness of satire, but the humour of the account of his return to his family is reassuring. "I began last week to permit my wife to sit at dinner with me, at the farthest end of a long table, and to answer (but with the utmost brevity) the few questions I ask her. Yet the smell of a yahoo continuing very offensive, I always keep my nose well stopped with rue, lavender, or tobacco leaves." The whole account of the Academy of Lagado is enlivened with humour, sometime malicious, sometimes delicious, and sometimes playfully sardonic. The absurdity of the projects so devotedly pursued provide ample scope for the play of satiric wit and humour. Whether it is the description of the projector, trying to find out a new way of preparing land for cultivation by placing expensive dry fruits at regular distance and letting loose an army of rats to dig up the whole ground in the process of securing their food, or it is the account of the new experiment of the Language professor who talks not through words but by

showing things themselves, or it is the description of the unique project of extracting sunbeams from cucumber, the humour of the piece makes it delightfully readable. Most humorous is this account of the great architect's dream :

"There was a most ingenious architect who had contrived a new method for building houses, by beginning at the roof and working downwards to the foundation, which he justified to me by the like practice of those two prudent insects, the bee and the spider."

There is infusion of humour in the *Battle of the Books*. Written with a view to disparage the moderns, the *Battle* treats of their pretensions and self-importance in a humorous way. Their efforts to over-reach themselves are observed by one who has a sense of the comic. Consider, for example, the paragraph in which the moderns take offence at the high position of the ancients and offer them two alternatives : "either that the ancients would please to remove themselves and their effects down to the lower summity, which the moderns would graciously surrender to them, and advance in their place ; or else the said ancients will give leave to the moderns to come with shovels and mattocks, and level the said hill as low as they shall think it convenient." The humour of the piece is that the moderns will not secure a higher place by raising their own position, but by downgrading the ancients. How pretentious : Isn't it rather funny to observe the misplaced enthusiasm of human vanity.

Sometimes Swift uses humour in the manner of Chaucer : to reveal the springs of human action, to laugh at the distorted motive behind the act. Here is an example from the *Battle of the Books* :

"Having thus failed in his Design, the disappointed Champion bore a cruel Rancour to the *Ancients*, which he resolved to gratifie, by shewing all Marks of his Favour to the *Books* of his Adversaries, and lodging them in the fairest Apartments ; when at the same time, whatever *Book* had the boldness to own itself for an Advocate of the *Ancients*, was buried alive in some obscure Corner, and threatened upon the least Displeasure, to be turned out of Doors."

Neatly and quite homourously Swift floors his opponent, by showing him as malicious in intention and favouring the moderns not because they deserve but because of his consuming rancour for the ancients.

Sometimes Swift gets his comic effect by exaggeration and by inflating things to grotesque proportions. In such case the humour that arises is neither subtle nor refined ; nor perhaps it is meant to be. It arises from a perception of the grotesque. Such is the humour that runs through his account of the Aeolists sect in the *Tale of a Tub*. The effect is to make the aeolists appear utterly ridiculous. Also, consider the gross, malignant humour of the piece in the *Battle of the Books* in which Richard Bentley, the librarian, is shown as picking "worms out of the schoolmen" and swallowing them "fresh and fasting," with the result that his internals are agitated and create confusion in the library. This sort of humour may be miles away from the broad, farcial humour of Dickens or the subtle, highly refined humour of Shakespeare, but, nevertheless, it also forces a perception of the comic in man. *Gulliver's Travels* has many instances of humour arising from exaggeration. Read the account of Gulliver in the land of the tiny six inches high Lilliputians, and the way they strain themselves to keep Gulliver well provided and well looked after. Nine hundred villages are ordered to supply his food, three hundred tailors are commissioned to make his clothes, and no less than six hundred persons are there to act as his domestics. But the meticulousness of the Lilliputians is best seen in their effort to compute the exact quantity of food required by their guest. Gulliver is told that he would be given food equivalent to the quantity consumed by 1728 Lilliputians. And how does this figure is arrived at ?

".....he told me, that his Majesty's mathematicians, having taken the height of my body by the help of a quadrant, and finding it to exceed theirs in the proportion of twelve to one, they concluded from the similarity of their bodies, that mine must contain at least 1728 of theirs, and consequently would require as much food as was necessary to support that number of Lilliputians. By which the reader may conceive an idea of the ingenuity of that people, as well as the prudent and exact economy of so great a prince."

Swift's wit is seen to best advantage in his poems. Some of his lines remain sticking to the memory, as for example :

Let them, when they once get in
Sell the Nation for a Pin.

Or

Then, since you dread no further Lashes,
You freely may forgive his Ashes.

But his prose is also enlivened with occasional flashes of satirical wit. Take this passage from the *Battle of the Books* :

"I advised, that the champions of each side should be coupled together, or otherwise mixed, that, like the lending of contrary poisons, their malignity might be employed among themselves."

Here the wit serves to reveal the petty nature of the controversy and the absurdity of the whole situation. His wit plays havoc with his opponent, cutting them to size in a single stroke. It is no doubt wit, but wit tinged with malignity, that makes these lines regarding Wharton's character memorable :

"He is a Presbyterian in Politics, and an Atheist in Religion ; but he chuseth at present to whore with a Papist."

Again, it is wit that helps him to score a point in an argument. See his account of the philosophy of the Aeolists in *A Tale of a Tub* :

"Words are but wind ; and learning is nothing but words ; ergo learning is nothing but wind."

Sarcasm is another tool which the satirist can use to great effect. Swift makes use of it at appropriate places, only when he does not want to enter into argument but simply brushes the opponent aside with sarcasm. To take an example, Swift condemns the use of pompous words, the meaning of which is often not understood by the audience and shows such contempt for the champions of polysyllables that it is difficult to put up any defence against his attack :

"I defy the greatest Divine to produce any Law either of God or Man which obliges me to comprehend the meaning of *Omniscience*, *Omnipresence*, *Ubiquity*, *Beatifick Vision*, etc."

Also notice the sarcasm that runs through his defense of nominal Christianity in *Argument Against the Abolition of Christianity*. The same tendency is at work when he defines happiness as the state of being "a fool among knaves." Again,

in *Drapier's Letters*, he is all the time belittling Wood by pouring sarcasm on him.

Needless to say, the satire of Swift takes on a sharp edge as a result of his effective use of humour, wit and sarcasm. His wit and humour make for variety and force the reader to perceive the comic, while his sarcasm deals a death-blow to his satiric target.

CHAPTER VIII

SWIFT'S PLACE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

Much misrepresented and often misunderstood, Swift, thanks to the efforts of his twentieth century critics, is now gradually emerging from the cloud that had obscured his fame for such a long time, since his death in 1745. He is now being generally recognised as a writer of powerful satires, which embittered his own contemporaries and so unbalanced the later critics, like Thackray and Scott, as to upset their judgment of the nature and quality of his writings. Tragic as it was, the reaction against Swift was in effect an acknowledgement of the power of his satires to vex the world—which is what the Dean aimed at.

Though Swift had written poems too, yet his greatness and his place in the history of literature will depend finally on the value of his satire. As Herbert Davis says, "It is for his satire that Jonathan Swift is read, and will continue to be read." During his literary career spanning a period of about 30 years he gave to the world some of the finest satires. And his vision was not limited to only one aspect of life. It was comprehensive in range, covering as it did all aspect of life and human activity—religion, social institution, politics, philosophy and literature ; it was deep in that it penetrated far beneath the outward show of things, exposing to critical gaze the corruption and evils that lay at the bottom. His satire is universal in that it touches human nature itself and shows us its many perversions.

But for all the bitterness and sharpness of his satire, Swift was not a misanthropist as some critics would have us believe. He wrote not out of spite, nor to obtain relief from the pressure of his allegedly neurotic nature. He wrote because the world he lived in was riddled with evils and corruptions and absurdities, and he wanted to laugh men out of them. He was a reformist, but instead of the pulpit he chose the pen to express his sense of the deviation of mankind in general from ideal

standards and also his perception of the comic in the pretensions, vanities and follies of man.

Where then shall we place him ? Surely, he does not belong to the line of those writers who create new worlds of poetic vision, as do Shakespeare and Keats and Lawrence. That was not his field. He derives his strength from his power to destroy a world of pretensions and unreason. He does not create ; he only clears the ground for others to build a new edifice.

The proper place of Swift is, therefore, among those writers who through their satirical writings force a perception of the depraved, the corrupt and the absurd in order to laugh us away from. As Herbert Davis says, Swift belongs to the line of **Rebelais** and **Cervantes**. He is in the line of great English satirists, among whom one may count the names of Bernard Shaw, George Orwell, Fielding and Meredith. To quote Herbert Davis, "He had satirized and laughed at the ways of mankind, to try and amend them, knowing that it was necessary to do the work of **Rebelais** and **Cervantes** over again ; and knowing likewise that though their works yet remained and continued to be read, it would still be necessary in later generations for others to arise who would carry on their work."

CHAPTER IX

SOME CRITICAL OPINIONS ON SWIFT & HIS ART

(1)

Swift's style is very near perfection. Clear, pointed, precise, he seems to have no difficulty in finding words to express exactly the impression which he wishes to convey. The sentences are not always grammatically correct, but they come home to the reader, like the words of a great orator or advocate, with convincing force. He realizes so clearly what he is describing that the reader is, of necessity, interested and impressed. There are no tricks of style, no recurring phrases : no ornaments, no studied effects ; the object is attained without apparent effort, with an outward gravity marking the underlying satire or cynicism, and an apparent calmness concealing bitter invective. There is never any doubt of his earnestness, whatever may be the mockery on the surface. For the metaphysical and the speculative, he had no sympathy.

Swift was a master satirist, and his irony was deadly. He was the greatest among the writers of his time, if we judge them by the standard of sheer power of mind..... Order, rule, sobriety—these are the principles he set before him when he wrote, and they form the basis of his views on life, politics and religion.

G. A. Aitkens : *Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. IX.*

(2)

At times Swift's irony seems more disturbing than the evils which it exposes, and the strength of his own sufferings at the spectacle of human unwisdom overpowers his readers so that his objection is forgotten. The cold fury of the *Modest Proposal* and the mad heat of the *Legion Club* show rather a victim than a moralist.

His character is the most provocative of the whole age and in his writings we find the age's profoundest commentary on itself. The changes he wishes for were not social in any limited

sense. The system under which he lived would serve as well as any. That intelligence and disinterestness which he found to be lacking would, if men lived in their light, effect without violence any necessary reforms. But he lived in a time of singular complacency when society was perhaps more tolerant than usual of its own weaknesses. His indignation was the measure of the futility of his task, that of persuading mankind to enter into their inheritance of sweetness and light to which, as being capable of reason, they had beed born.

Dyson and Butt : *Augustans and Romantics.*

(3)

But this writer (Swift) makes no reference to beauty, never return at all to the principle of awe and divine in things; would he not then seem a monster ? In style, sculpture without beauty ; in temper, benevolence without love ; mastery of intellect without serenity—by stating these opposites we are not much closer than such a critic to a real divination of this mysterious figure, whose artistic form is transparent and perfect, who has written himself down at much length, but has never been described, and perhaps never will be. Crowning the accomplishment of the purely prose genius in English, he stands apart from his environment, like an *Agonistes* of the older drama.....

A peculiar realistic memory and dominant intellect give him his minute tenacity to point, detail, and subtlety. But his prose also has rhythm, arrangement, lightness, concision ; it has, in fact, a power of statement that is beyond competition in English, if more philosophical or poetical minds be excluded.

Oliver Elton : *The Augustan Ages.*

(4)

Pessimism is perfectly compatible with bland enjoyment of the good things in a bad world with Swift's pessimism was not of this type. It meant energetic hatred of definite things and people who were always before him.

Swift—a practised self-tormentor, though not in the ordinary ascetic sense—mortifies any disposition to admire his fellows by dwelling upon the physical necessities which seem to lower and degrade human pride. Beauty is but skin deep ; beneath it is a vile carcase. He always sees the “flayed woman” of the *Tale of a Tub*. The thought is hideous, hateful, horrible, and therefore it fascinates him. He loves to dwell upon the

hateful, because it justifies his hate. He nurses his misanthropy, as he might tear his flesh to keep his mortality before his eyes.

The Yahoo is the embodiment of the bestial element in man ; and Swift in his wrath takes the bestial for the predominating element. The hideous, filthy, lustful monster yet asserts its relationship to him in the most humiliating fashion : and he traces in its conduct the resemblance to all the main activities of the human being. Like the human being it fights and squabbles for the satisfaction of its lust, or to gain certain shiny yellow stones ; it befouls the weak and fawns upon the strong with loathsome compliance.....

We are attracted by the kindly optimist who assures us that good predominates in everything and everybody, and believes that a speedy advent of the millenium must reward our manifold excellence. We cannot forgive those who hold men to be "mostly fools," or, as Swift would assert, mere brutes in disguise, and even carry out that disagreeable opinion in detail. There is something uncomfortable and therefore repellent of sympathy in the mood which dwells upon the darker side of society, even though with wrathful indignation against the irremovable evils. Swift's hatred of oppression, burning and genuine as it was, is no apology with most readers for his perseverance in asserting its existence. "Speak comfortable things to us" is the cry of men to the prophet in all ages ; and he who would assault abuses must count upon offending many who do not approve them.

Leslie Stephen : *Swift* (E. M. L. Series)

(5)

I suggest that the common approaches to Swift's satire, with an emphasis on manipulation of ideas, or else in terms of technique of fiction, usually mislead one. Swift's imagination worked in terms of people. He did not invent a set of values to defend, or objects to attack ; he started from human embodiment of those values and vices, and he addressed himself to people whom he wishes to encourage, refute or annihilate.

To consider *Gulliver's Travels* as a novel, to present it in language evolved for the criticism of prose fiction, and to study Swift's 'personae' as people, is to misunderstand this book. *Gulliver* is admittedly an ancestor of stories like *Erewhon* and *Brave New World*. Swift, however, was writing a prose satire according to another form, curiously static and didactic, but

not narrative as an epic or novel is. Its structure and its repetitive pattern help to explain both why it succeeds as a children's book and why it cannot be made into a satisfactory film or drama. Very little of the life in *Gulliver* belongs to its large 'story' or 'plot' line, or to the evolution of character. The life comes from the detached characterizations of individuals who otherwise exists as flat mask or as spokesmen and mouth-pieces ; and, most of all, from the operations of Swift's irony.

Irvin Ehrenpreis : *The Personality of Johnathan Swift.*

(6)

‘Swift was for the ancients against the moderns because he saw history not as progressive amelioration, but as a struggle, often marked by phases of disastrous failure, to maintain the values fixed for ever by antiquity. Modern philosophy, science, criticism, and politics, and much modern religion, were for him so many fantastic divagations from the plain path of Nature and Reason. The Goths of ignorance, pedantry, pride, or corruption were ever ready to swarm from their frozen North and bury all in universal darkness, and the few friends of Nature and of civilization must be continually vigilant in their defence.....’

‘Satire seems to occur somewhere between acceptance and revolution, and it is not surprising, if this is so, that the early eighteenth century should have been its most high and palmy time. Swift himself, for all his discontent (divine or pathological) was no revolutionary ; his satire, as we have suggested, always refers to standards which exist ready-made, and which would become operative without need for subversive change, if only men would not perversely depart from them.’

Basil Willey : *The Eighteenth-Century Background.*

(7)

‘Among the great Augustans who looked to the integral life of the past and strove to protect and to adapt what still survived against the inroads of the Enlightenment, Swift is the most indirect, most shifting, yet most inexorable, of all. He is deeply conscious of the disturbing tendencies of the age and very earnest carrying out the task that seems so urgent to him as the moralist he always—and rightly—claimed to be and as a man whose personal need to feel himself in control of experience is peculiarly strong. His materials and their organization,

the form and contents of the satires, are his response to a particular situation at a time when, within and without, chaos constantly threatened. Defense was essential, yet it could be achieved only by vigilant attack, sustained simultaneously on many fronts. Our first impression, in Swift's work, is of the elusive brilliance of the attack ; a glancing, dazzling mind appears to be concerned solely with the presentation of absurdity or of evil, shifting its points of view constantly the better to perform its task. But as we grow accustomed to his ways of thinking and feeling, we become aware that at the heart of Swift's work are unity and consistency, and we see that the attack is also a defense, that tools of destructions are being employed for a positive and constructive purpose. The inventiveness and resourcefulness of his satiric method is seen as arising directly out of the necessities of his mind and of his age ; the changing complications of his irony are the necessary expression of an untiring devotion to the few certainties that life affords."

Kathleen Williams : *Jonathan Swift and the Age of Compromise.*

(8)

"For Swift, the awareness of evil in a depraved world is the only way of avoiding what he called in *A Tale of a Tub* "the sublime and refined point of felicity, called, the possession of being well deceived ; the serene peaceful state, of being a fool among knaves." It lands one instead in the miserable state of being a wise among fools. But awareness is essential to the moral struggle. It is a positive impulse against the destructive element, an affirmation of life. For Swift this goes much further. His satire seems to have almost a religious purpose. He presents a satiric vision of an irrational world that becomes his prelude to an act of faith."

Philip Pinkus : Introduction, *Jonathan Swift : A Selection of His Works*

(9)

"Swift is the greatest writer of the classical age by the force of his genius ; the concern for art and the care of form are not in his case the essential motive of creation. His work owes an exceptionally broad scope to the freedom and penetration of the thought. He carries the rational criticism of values to a point where it menaces and impairs the very reasons to live. In

his case, therefore, lucidity and the search for balance are suffused with an intellectual emotion, concentrated and intense, which at times cannot be distinguished from an impassioned bitterness, and the expression of which, despite the restraint of irony and humour, possess a pathetic vehemence."

Louis Cazamian : *A History of English Literature.*

(10)

"We need to recognize Swift not only as Addison spoke of him as "the greatest genius of his age," but as Shaw and as Pope saw him, as among the great satirists of the ages. When someone once wrote to Shaw and asked him why he did not write a book about his great predecessor, he replied on his usual postcard : "I am too busy carrying on Swift's work to have time to write about him." Shaw recognized him as one in the same tradition, at work on the same job, exposing the same follies and absurdities, disturbing the same complacencies. And Pope, when dedicating to him the *Dunciad*, through remembering all his various disguises, is mainly concerned to place him beside *Rebelais* and *Cervantes* in the European tradition :

O Thou, whatever title please thine ear,
Dean, Drapier, Bickerstaff, or Gulliver !
Whether thou chuse *Cervantes*' serious air,
Or laugh and shake in Rab 'lais' easy chair—

Herbert Davis : *Jonathan Swift.*
(in his Introduction to the 1964 edition)

(11)

".....The stress on Swift's "intellect" registers, it would appear, a confused sense, not only of the mental exercise involved in his irony, but of the habitually critical attitude he maintains toward the world, and of the emotions he specializes in.

"From 'critical' to 'negative' in this last sentence is, it will be observed, a shift of stress. There are writings of Swift where 'critical' is the more obvious word (and where 'intellectual' may seem correspondingly apt)—notably, the pamphlets or pamphleteering essays in which the irony is instrumental, directed and limited to a given end. The *Argument Against Abolishing Christianity* and the *Modest Proposal*, for instance, are discussible in the terms in which satire is commonly discussed : as the criticism of vice, folly, or

other aberration, by some kind of reference to positive standards. But even here, even in the *Argument*, where Swift's ironic intensity undeniably directs itself to the defense of something that he is intensely concerned to defend, the effect is essentially negative. The positive itself appears only negatively—a kind of skeletal presence, rigid enough, but without life or body; a necessary pre-condition, as it were, of directed negation. The intensity is purely destructive.

F. R. Leavis : *The Irony of Swift.*

(12)

“The success of Swift's fiction, and hence of his satire, largely depends on a persuasive accumulation of circumstantial and ironic detail, and (what is more important) on certain manipulations of detail.”

Joseph Horrell : *What Gulliver Knew in Swift.*
(Twentieth Century Views Series)

(13)

“To the two choices of life—to be a fool, or knave, or to retire from the human race to Utopia or Houyhnhnmland—More and Swift propose a third : one can live in the world by playing the fool and not being one, by keeping Utopia, a city of the mind, where Raphael Nonsense and Lemuel Gulliver can live..... What is required for the third choice of life is a sense of irony, a sense of the difference and yet the relation between the realms of the actual and of the ideal, a consciousness of where one really stands as opposed to where one must appear to stand. Swift, who pretended to have introduced irony, refined it, and showed its use, obviously learned something about it from Thomas More.”

John Traugott : *Voyage to Nowhere with Thomas More and Jonathan Swift.*
Reproduced in Twentieth Century Views Series.

(14)

“His (Swift's) place is alongside of Samuel Butler, Pope, Goldsmith, Fielding, Jane Austen, for it is in such writers that the age of comic vision spoke most clearly. As Yeats would have said, their works thought in them. Themes, language, techniques were in a sense part of what they felt about the human situation, which they assessed from much the same

point of observation and always—with the exception of the later Fielding—in terms of comic perception. Theirs was not a vision of progress but of man's habitual involvement in ridiculous circumstances. Comedy, as they understood and practised it, was the means of recording the manifold ways in which the human race contrived to distort itself and generally to misconstrue its natural and proper functions and ends..... As satiric commentators they (Swift and the other writers of his age) stood well apart from the scenes they depicted. In doing so and in allowing us to share with them this sense of distance they were defining—in peculiar manner of artistic statement—the gap between the natural and the unnatural. We were to attain normality by guarding against pride, and this we could very well do by observing the distorted figures given in comedy. Of the many misapprehensions of Swift none is wider of the mark than that which represents him as a satirist who wrote out of a bitter mind and a bitter heart, who saw only man's ineptitude and failure, and who despised his fellows because he first despised himself. It is not love that Swift expresses, but neither is it hatred. His comic sense kept him, as it did the writers who belong with him, in a region lying between.

Ricardo Quintana : *Swift : An Introduction.*

(15)

If Swift is not the greatest of the Augustans, he is beyond question the most compelling. It is in respect of the man himself that judgments must differ most sharply, but whether one regards his character with sympathy or with detestation one will always feel the strange fascination of his personality. As an artist, Swift's greatness is indisputable. Partly, this greatness lies in the incomparable matching of substance and voice. Its chief source, however, is not craftsmanship but the moral realism through which all of Swift's terrific intellectual intensity found expression. It is not as you think—look !

Ricardo Quintana : *The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift.*

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CHAPTER X

INTRODUCTION TO THE BATTLE OF THE BOOKS

I. ITS BACKGROUND

The Battle of the Books was published along with *A Tale of a Tub* and *The Mechanical Operation of the Spirit*, in the year 1704. Though written in 1697, as is clear from the Bookseller's notice, its publication was delayed presumably due to William Temple's opposition on account of the violent nature of its satire and its uncompromising attack on Wotton.

The Battle had an interesting background to its composition. It was written not out of a sense of inner urgency but in order to meet an embarrassing situation created by the literary quarrel between his patron, William Temple, on one hand and Richard Bentley and William Wotton, two noted scholars of the time, on another. It will be futile for a reader to look for personal conviction or belief in such a writing : this in fact is not the strength of the *Battle*. Its strength lies in the brilliancy of its satire.

Let us sum up the events leading to the composition of the *Battle*. Swift's patron, William Temple, an astute diplomat was spending his honourable retirement in the pursuit of literature and gardening. He was commonly regarded as an embodiment of liberal culture. In 1690, he happened to write an essay on *Ancient and Modern Learning*. It was not a literary exception, rather another addition to the controversy regarding the relative merits of the ancients and the moderns then going on in Europe and which had recently agitated some minds in England too. Temple's essay was only the first in a long chain of attacks and counter-attacks. He had rebutted the argument advanced in support of the modern learning, that knowledge is cumulative, and given the palm of supremacy to the ancients. He praised Aesops' *Fables* and the *Epistles of Phalaris* as the best specimens in their respective fields. One of his supporters, Charles Boyle, thereupon set himself the task of editing anew the *Epistles of Phalaris*, since the work had received undiluted

praise from Temple. But before he could bring out his edition, one William Wotton, a supporter of the modern learning, joined, issue with Temple. His *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning*, issued in 1694, was in the nature of a challenge to Temple's "disparagement of the moderns." Wotton's defence was essentially that of modern learning and modern knowledge. So far as literature was concerned, he himself accepted the superiority of the ancients over the modern writers. Though Wotton's stand was sound and reasonable, yet the very fact that he had dared to challenge the scholarship and understanding of Temple was enough to incense the supporters of the latter. To make the matters worse, the Keeper of St. James's Library, Richard Bentley, who was also a supporter of the moderns, had shown courtesy to Charles Boyle when the latter was consulting a manuscript text of the *Epistles of Phalaris* to prepare his new edition. Therefore when Boyle issued his edition in 1695 he could not refrain from slighting Bentley.

But Bentley was not to take the insult lying down. He was a noted philologist and a great scholar. He discovered that the much praised *Epistles of Phalaris* and Aesop's *Fables* were spurious, and to this effect he appended a note to the second edition of Wotton's *Reflections* which came out in June 1697. The whole episode was now assuming scandalous proportions, as it ridiculed the judgment of all those who had sided with Temple. The fury was turned on Bentley. The wits of Christ Church, who had all along been on the side of Temple and Boyle, issued a rejoinder called *Dr. Bentley's Dissertations on the Epistles of Phalaris, and the Fables of Aesop, Examin'd by the Honourable Charles Boyle, Esq.* The controversy was kept alive with the publication at regular intervals by both sides of pamphlets and rejoinders. Swift's *The Battle of the Books* was one of the writings penned in defence of Temple's stand. Though Swift might have thought of attacking his patron's opponents earlier also, but the immediate cause of the composition of the *Battle* was Wotton's *Reflections*, issued in 1697. It is now commonly believed that Swift started work on this satire in June 1697 and finished in March 1698. The reference to the mauling of Wotton and Bentley by Boyle in the last episode of the *Battle* may be seen as an allegorical representation of the victory which Swift believed Boyle to have scored over his opponents by issuing, in March 1698, *Dr. Bentley's Dissertation Examin'd.*

II. THE ANCIENT-MODERN CONTROVERSY

Until the dawn of the Renaissance the ancient learning and knowledge were looked upon as the summit of human civilization. And since the idea of progress had not yet crossed men's minds, the ancients were worshipped as final authority in all fields of learning and enquiry. But, as Ricardo Quintana points out, when Europe, emerging into the modern era after the darkness of the Middle Ages, discovered "new values in secular life and a new confidence in man's unaided confidence," the acceptance of new values implied a challenge to the supremacy of the ancients and the binding authority of the tradition. "What seemed to free men from the chains of the past was the idea of Progress."

This acceptance of the idea of progress meant an assertion of the relevance and supremacy of the modern learning as against the binding authority of the ancient. Though the debate regarding the respective merits of the ancients and the moderns did not get started in England until the latter half of the seventeenth century, but it had caused considerable commotion in France much early. A new climax was reached when Charles Perrault (1628—1713) issued a poem *Le Siecle de Louis le Grand* in 1687. It was followed by *Parallele des Anciens et des Modernes*. Perrault was an ardent admirer of the moderns and he argued that the achievements of the age of the French king Louis XIV were superior to those of the Augustan Age in Roman history. His argument was that knowledge is cumulative and that the standard of civilization as also the quality of the arts rise with the passage of time. But while Perrault had confined himself to literature, Fontenelle, who took up his argument, made the controversy much more broad-based by including the sciences also in his discussion. In his *Discours sur la nature de l'eglouge* and *Digression sur les anciens et les modernes*, he maintained the superiority of modern learning. The same stand was taken by one Thomas Burnet in the book, *Sacred Theory of the Earth*. Together the three writers established the fact that human knowledge and learning had made much advance since the days of Homer and Plato, Aristotle and Horace, and that the level of civilization was now definitely higher than in the days of Augustus, the Roman Emperor. Boileau, the well-known literary critic, spoke on the side of the ancients.

The literary controversy did not leave England unaffected.

The establishment of Royal Society in 1660 and the rise of the scientific movement did cause people to reflect on the respective merits of the old and the new natural philosophy. Dryden touched upon the literary aspect in his tentative assessment of the ancient and modern writers. As we have seen above, the spirit of the controversy caught on towards the end of the seventeenth century. Temple's *Essay* was like pouring oil on the fire. In his own way he tried to rebut the arguments of Perrault and Fontenelle. He rejected the idea of the cumulative advancement of knowledge. For great achievements it is not the cultural heritage that counts, but 'the pure native force of spirit or genius.' Furthermore, according to the cyclic theory of history, society and the general standard of achievement declines instead of rising with the passage of time. And therefore the moderns cannot achieve the same excellence which we find among the ancients. Exceptions may exist, but "it does not follow that there must be such in every age, nor in every country." This was, in brief, the stand of Temple. But he rendered his position vulnerable by praising Aesop's *Fables* and the *Epistles* of Phalaris as the best specimens of prose-writing. In doing so, he invited the sharp attack of Bentley and of Wotton, in reply to which Swift had to write the *Battle*.

III. THE PURPOSE OF THE BATTLE

The Battle was not written with a view to make a serious contribution to the controversy. As Quintana phrases it, Swift was "supremely indifferent" to the philosophic questions which were involved. His primary aim in writing the *Battle* was to put up a defense on behalf of his patron and to ridicule the pedantry of Bentley and Wotton; and this he does by his brilliant satiric handling of the given situation. He refers the argument back to the original controversy, the exaggerated claims of the moderns (originally the claims of the French under Louis XIV). "Our horses are own breeding, our arms are of our own forging and our clothes of our own cutting and sewing" (*The Battle of the Books*). The pedantry, the pride and the pretentious nature of the moderns are ruthlessly satirised. The episode of the Spider and the Bee exposes the hollow nature of the claims staked by the moderns. Like the spider, they too spin their edifice out of themselves, but then like him they have nothing but dirt and poison in their breasts.

In defending his patron, Swift disregarded the grounds on which Temple had based his argument ; for in argument and scholarship he would have been no match for Bentley. Instead he uses the weapon of sarcastic humour to tarnish the image of his rival.

To be effective, Swift uses various satiric devices to make the whole thing appear as a work of a detached viewer. The very title, a metaphor, provides a broad base of a phenomenon in human affairs. The reader is put in a position of vantage as he watches the fight in company of the aerial viewer ; the patterns and the outlines interest him more than the details of the arena. It should be noted that Richard Bentley seemed to have struck a final blow to Temple's *Essay* by proving one of the details spurious. But Swift does not touch this point. He assumes the authenticity of the Epistles, and his assumed point of view make the warring moderns appear misguided and vain. The historian of the Battle, for this is the role assumed by the author, more than once creates the illusion of being just and impartial.

IV. SWIFT'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS MODERN LEARNING

Though Swift wrote *The Battle* mainly to defend his patron, but the stand he takes in the satire is consistent with "the whole bent of his taste and opinions." He was unduly sceptical of modern learning and knowledge and regarded the tall claims made on behalf of new sciences and literature as presumptuous. With great gusto he fell upon those moderns who indulged in system-spinning in the field of philosophy and in word-spinning in the field of literature. He saw their endeavours as attempts to gain cheap popularity and easy reward. As early as 1692, Swift had expressed his distrust of modern wits in the *Ode to the Athenian Society*. In it he lashes out at the "new modish systems."

"The wits, I mean the atheists of the age,
Who fain would rule the pulpit, as they do the stage,
Wondrous refiners of philosophy,
Of morals and divinity,
By the new modish system of reducing all to sense,
Against all logic....."

The most scathing criticism of new sciences is to be found in the description of the Academy of Lagado and the various pro-

jects on which its scientists are working (*Gulliver's Travels*, *Bk III*). The new attitude in matters concerning Religion is made the target of his satire in *A Tale of A Tub*. The new attitude is seen as a manifestation of human unreason and inverted values.

But of all things, it is modern authors and their fashions and practices that Swift detests most. In their hands, language has been corrupted and emptied of all meaning. Instead of giving "sweetness and light" they offer poison and dirt. In *A Tale of a Tub*, he exposes the foibles of the Grub-street brotherhood as well as the societies of Gresham and of Wills, the hack-writers and fashionable poets, the virtuosos and the wits. His main theme is that the seventeenth century writers have corrupted literature. He parodies their affected style which spins out words copiously meaning anything. Also he uses the tools of Dryden and other modern writers to ridicule them. He exposes with youthful insolence the petty shams and insincerities used by seventeenth century writers to build up a literary reputation. He makes sports with the tricks of the trade in the *Tale* by himself making use of the whole paraphernalia of "Prefaces, Epistles, Advertisements, Introductions, Prolegomenas, Apparatuses, To the Reader." He justifies himself by referring to Dryden's practice. "Our great Dryden has long carried it as far as it would go, and with incredible Success. He has often said to me in Confidence, that World would have never suspected him to be so great a Poet, if he had not assured them so frequently in his Prefaces, that it was impossible they could either doubt or forget it." In the same way, the tricks of the seventeenth century scholar are humorously ridiculed, his use of the "Abstracts, Summaries, Compendiums, Extracts, Collections, Medullas, Excerpta quaedams, Florilegias and the like" to impress his scholarship upon the public. In a passage remarkable for its impudence of tone and sarcasm, Swift shows the way the moderns acquire scholarship and learning :

"The most accomplisht Way of using Books at present, is twofold : Either first, to serve them as some Men do Lords, learn their Titles exactly, and then brag of their Acquaintance. Or Secondly, which is indeed the choicer, the profounder, and politer Method, to get a thorough Insight into the *Index*, by which the whole Book is governed and turned, like Fishes by the Tail. For, to enter the Palace of Learning at the *great*

Gate, requires an expense of Time and Forms ; therefore Men of much Haste and little Ceremony, are content to get in by the *Back-door*."

Similarly, Swift is contemptuous of modern critics, who are all the time busy in finding faults with the ancients. In his characteristic ironic manner he calls them 'our noble moderns,' chief among whom are Richard Bentley, William Wotton and John Dennis. They are ridiculed in the *Digression Concerning Critics in A Tale of a Tub*.

"The Third, and Noblest Sort, is that of the True Critick, whose Original is the most Ancient of all. Every True Critick is a Hero born, descending in a direct Line from a Celestial Stem, by Momus and Hybris, who begat Zoilus, who begat Tigellius, who begat Etcetera the Elder, who begat B—tly (Bentley) and Rym—r (Rymer) and W—tton (Wotton) and Perrault, and Dennis, who begat Etcetera the Younger."

It was therefore natural that one who hated the moderns so intensely should speak on the side of the Ancients when the opportunity offered itself. In the *Battle*, Swift had in the episode of the Spider and the Bee expressed his admiration for the "sweetness and light" of the ancients and an intense contempt for the vain presumptions of the modern writers. "The fable and the interpretation of it," says Herbert Davis, "are Swift's real contribution to the debate between the Ancients and the Moderns ; and it is not surprising that a hundred and fifty years later, when the debate had taken another form, Swift's phrase "sweetness and light" was carried as a banner by a young apostle of culture (Matthew Arnold) as he advanced against the hosts of the Phlistines." Swift's interpretation of the dispute between two literary factions is given through Aesop :

"For, pray Gentlemen, was ever any thing so *Modern* as the *Spider* in his Air, his Turns, and his Paradoxes ? He argues in the behalf of *You* his Brethren, and Himself, with many Boastings of his native Stock, and great Genius ; that he Spins and Spits wholly from himself, and scorns to own any Obligation or Assistance from without. Then he displays to you his great Skill in Architecture, and Improvement in the Mathematics.....yet, if the

materials be nothing but *Dirt*, spun out of your Entrails (the Guts of Modern Brains) the Edifice will conclude at last in a Cobweb.....As for *Us*, the Antients, we are content with the Bee, to pretend to Nothing of our own, beyond our *Wings* and our *Voice* : that is to say, our *Flights* and our *Language* ; For the rest, whatever we have got, has been by infinite Labor, and search, and ranging thro' every Corner of Nature : The Difference is that instead of *Dirt* and *Poison*, we have rather chosen to fill our Hives with *Honey* and *Wax*, thus furnishing Mankind with the two Noblest of Things, which are *Sweetness* and *Light*."

The description of the bee's activity suggests, as Kathleen Williams points out, "the old conception of literature as a reshaping through the vigorous effort of the individual, of existing materials ; the spider follows the easier course of a self-expression uncontrolled by reference to anything beyond himself, and so lacking in that discipline which is forced upon the bee by the effort to interpret the outside world and extract from it honey and wax." Swift's use of the bee as a symbol is particularly interesting, as Temple in his *Essay of Poetry* has also used it to symbolise creative activity, for much art and labour is involved in the bee's selection of the flower, extraction of honey and separation of wax.

V. SUPPOSED INFLUENCES ON THE BATTLE

It is difficult to say with any amount of accuracy if Swift was influenced by other writers or that he had some definite sources to draw upon in writing the *Battle*. The charge of plagiarism which Wotton brought against Swift was neither well-considered nor supported by material evidence : it was motivated more by personal spite than anything else. However, there do exist certain similarities between the *Battle of the Books* and a few French books which deserve careful examination to determine precisely how much the Dean owed to the writers across the Channel.

1. The first supposed source of Swift is a French book *Histoire Poetique de la Guerre nouvellement declaree entre les Anciens et les Moderns* written by Francois de Callieres. Wotton was referring to this book when he charged Swift of plagiarism, though he wrongly called it *Combat des Livres*. In his book, Callieres portrays a battle royal between the forces of

the ancients and that of the moderns. Like Swift's, his ancients also live on a peak of Parnassus, while the moderns live on another peak. Their amusing quarrel forms the main theme of the book, as it does in Swift also. But on the basis of such parallelisms, it cannot be said with certainty that Swift plagiarised Callieres *mutalis mutandis* (Wotton's accusation.) There is no evidence to suggest that Swift had read this book, though possibly it did pass through his hands. As a matter of fact, he categorically refused any external source while replying to William Wotton's charge. "He (that is Swift) takes his boldnes from never having seen any such treatise in his life : nor read of it before ; and he is sure it is impossible for two writers of different times and countries, to agree in their thoughts after such a manner, that the two continued discourses shall be the same, only *mutalis mutandis*." In this regard Henry Craik's point of view seems most plausible. Referring to the French book he says, "Its contents amply prove that, though the book might, and probably did, pass through Swift's hands, and perhaps suggested certain incidents in his own narrative, it yet possesses no claim whatever to have been the basis of the main structure of his satire."

2. The second book named in connection with sources of the 'Battle' is *Novelle Allegorique on Histories des Derniers Troubles arrivez au Royaumed' Eloquence* written by one Monsieur de Furetiere. It is an account of the battle fought by Eloquence on one hand and Nonsense on another. The cause of the dispute is an attack by the forces of Nonsense—Puns, Antitheses and Allusions—on the domain of Rhetoric. Again, it is difficult to ascertain for definite, Swift's debt to this work. Perhaps the suggestion of a battle to allegorically represent the ancient-modern controversy came from this book.

3. Some critics have taken pains to prove that Swift's *Battle* is an allegorical representation of Sir William Temple's *Essay*, but there is not much substance in this claim. It is obvious to any critical mind that, since the *Essay* and its contents were the target of Bentley and Wotton, its allegorical version would in no way have redeemed Temple's position. Swift does take the line adopted by Temple, but what makes the *Battle* a great satire is its author's masterly handling of the various satire devices employed. Swift seeks to defend his patron not by offering arguments and illustrations in his behalf but by his devastating use of irony, allegory, dramatic mask and mock-

heroic technique to reduce the opponents to contemptible creatures. The whole narrative is enlivened with wit and humour and a certain youthful insolence. But since the satire was in Temple's defence, Swift was careful to make use the literary names cited by his patron. But the existence of common names in the works of two men does not necessarily mean that the *Battle* was no more than an allegorical version of the *Essay*.

CHAPTER XI

SATIRIC DEVICES USED IN THE BATTLE

1. USE OF MASK

The Battle of the Books was written to satirise the pride, pedantry and arrogance of William Temple's critics—Richard Bentley and Wotton. The immediate aim of the satirist was to wind up the ancient-modern controversy in a manner that suggested William Temple's side to have won the dispute. On the surface, it was a satire on the ignorance and hollow claims and insolence of the moderns viewed against the profound learning, quiet scholarship and invincible strength of the ancients ; but a direct statement to this effect would not have made any difference in the existing controversy. What makes the *Battle* a disarming satire is its satiric technique which includes the use of assumed identity or mask.

In Chapter V we have discussed Swift's use of a dramatic mask or mouthpiece to gain the effect of impersonality and to weave rich patterns of irony in his satire. As Professor Sutherland says, Swift rarely makes a personal appearance in his satiric writings ; often he speaks through a fictive character or 'personae' created by him to act as his mouthpiece. The use of the mask or mouthpiece also serves to provide a unity to the work as all the episodes narrated in it are seen through him.

In the *Battle of the Books*, Swift uses a comparatively simple mouthpiece, simple in the sense that his observations do not have the richness of irony nor either the complexity of meaning that we find in Gulliver's observations and utterances. In the *Battle*, we observe the fight through the eyes of a supposedly impartial observer. Swift creates a historian who is supposed to have written the account impartially and objectively. The Author (that is, the supposed Historian) says : "I, being possessed of all qualifications requisite in an historian, and retained by neither party, have resolved to comply with the urgent importunity of my friends, by writing down a full impartial account thereof." However we are not to take him very seriously. His account is neither full nor impartial. It is a highly coloured

and partisan version of the fight, clearly favouring the Ancients. This is apparent from even a casual reading of the book. In all episodes the Ancients are shown in a favourable light, while no opportunity is allowed to go unutilized in pouring ridicule upon the Moderns. Consider the first episode, the beginning of the controversy. The account takes for granted the right of the Ancients to the highest peak, and thus the efforts of the Moderns to dislodge them are made to appear absurd considering that the hill on which the former lived was "an entire rock," "which would break their (Moderns') tools and hearts, without any damage to itself. Again, the Bee and the Spider is a convenient excuse to malign the Moderns by identifying them with the poisonous spider. The comments of Aesop are also the views of Swift himself.

Nor is the account full and complete. Besides omitting some of the well-known names, Swift has abruptly broken off the narrative at many places probably because he could not think of a way out to bring the episode in hand to a satisfactory conclusion or because the conclusion arising from what has gone before might have proved embarrassing. These gaps in the narrative are explained by a very plausible excuse ; the Bookseller informs the reader that manuscript has suffered damage in several places "by the injury of fortune or weather," and so it is difficult to know the final outcome of the battle.

Through the use of the mouthpiece, Swift does make an attempt to appear impartial and objective. However, the Historian never solidifies into a tangible character to carry much conviction with readers. No serious effort is made him develop into an independent character such as the Author in *A Tale of a Tub* or M. B. Drapier. No personal details regarding the Historian are furnished, except that he is not retained by any side. All the same the use of the mouthpiece is interesting as Swift is here employing a device which he will later develop into a very powerful satiric tool.

2. THE USE OF ALLEGORY

Swift has successfully experimented with allegory as a satiric device in the *Battle*. It runs throughout the satire, although it is not evenly contrived. The very title allegorises the literary differences in which lots of rejoinders, briefs, notes, considerations, answers, replies, remarks, reflections, objections and confutations" were hurled by both the parties at each

other. The masked satirist allegorises the origin of the literary controversy in the form of an attempt on the part of the lowly placed Moderns to usurp the high peak on which the Ancients lived. The unmindful attack on the ancient writers is symbolised in the threat issued by the Moderns to their counterparts either to vacate the higher summit, or "give leave to the moderns to come with shovels and mattocks, and level the said hill as low as they shall think it, convenient." The futility of the efforts of the Moderns is suggested in these lines :

"That as to the levelling or digging down, it was either folly or ignorance to propose it, if they (moderns) did, or did not know, how that side of the hill was an entire rock, which would break their tools and hearts, without any damage to itself. That they would therefore advise the moderns rather to raise their own side of the hill, than dream of pulling down that of the ancients ; to the former of which they would not only give license but also largely contribute. All this was rejected by the moderns with much indignation who still insisted upon one of the two expedients , and so this difference broke out into a long and obstinate war....."

The parallel events that gave rise to this unpleasant controversy in France (with the poems and tracts of Perrault and Fontenelle) are quite recognizable. Besides one cannot but stop to marvel at the deftness of the satirist in setting forth the origin of the controversy, his use of the cool and calculated technical diction of the 'said historian' and his assumed mock impartiality.

The animated books of St. James's Library allegorise the controversy which arose in England after certain attempts by the Royal Society to compare the achievements of the ancients and the moderns in the field of natural philosophy and Dryden's cautious assessment in the field of literature. It turned into an open and full-fledged controversy when Sir William Temple chose to answer seriously Fontenelle's arguments in favour of the moderns.

The fable of the bee and the spider offer a dramatic situation for the most exciting allegorization of the two points of view. Swift might have got the hint to use the bee as a symbol for the ancients from Temple's *Essay on Poetry*. The

spider is identified with the moderns. The allegorical significance of the two symbols is made clear by Aesop. The spider, who collects nothing but dirt and poison and who boasts of not drawing upon the resources of nature to make his edifice but spins out of himself, is typical of the moderns who indulge in vain boast and produce undisciplined writings with no reference to outside standards; on the other hand, the bee, who has to exercise judgment in choosing the flower, use his art in extracting honey and labour hard to separate the wax, thus giving sweetness and light to the world, stands for the Ancients.

And when the two armies actually clash, Swift gets another opportunity to show his ability to write allegorical narrative. The armour of each warrior suggests the nature of his literary production. The Epic writers lead the Ancients and ride on horses. The philosophical nature of Plato's and Aristotle's writings is suggested by making them bowmen who shoot their arrows in the air. The inconsequential nature of the army of the moderns is suggested by describing most of their troops as "mercenaries." Here is his amusing description of the moderns: "The rest were a confused multitude, led by Scotus, Aquinas, and Bellarmine; of mighty bulk and stature, but without either arms, courage, or discipline. In the last place, came infinite swarms of calones, a disorderly rout led by L'Estrange; rogues and ragamuffins, that follow the camp for nothing but the plunder, all without coats to cover them." The last phrase "all without coats to cover them" is an allegorical way of referring to cheap pamphlets which had no hard covers on them.

And consider too the allegorical significance of the combat between the leaders of the two sides. The superiority of the ancients over the modern is suggested by giving them the palm of victory in each one of the combats. Homer gets the better of Gondibert, and kills both Perrault and Fontenelle, the two staunch defenders of the moderns, by hurling one at another, with the same blow dashing out their brains. The most interesting combat is the one that takes place between Virgil and Dryden. The latter, it may be noted, had made attempts to ape the manners of Virgil. Therefore, while Virgil's armour shines and fits him awfully well, Dryden's is ill-fitting and clearly not his own but a borrowed one.

The narrative dealing with Wotton and Bentley is allegorical in nature. The real events comprising their attack on Temple,

and Charles Boyle's answer to them, can be seen behind the narrative. Bentley's challenge to the authenticity of Aesop's *Fables* and the *Epistles* of Phalaris is allegorically alluded in his attempt by policy or surprise to attack 'some neglected quarter of the ancients' army. Bentley, accompanied by Confusion and Amaze, horror and Affright, set out to fulfil his mission and

"As he came near, beheld two heroes of the ancients' army, Phalaris and Aesop, lay fast asleep: Bentley would fain have despatched them both, and stealing close, aimed his flail at Phalaris's breast. But then the goddess Affright interposing, caught the modern in her icy arms, and dragged him from the danger she foresaw; both the dormant heroes happened to turn at the same instant, though soundly sleeping, and busy in a dream. For Phalaris was just that minute dreaming how a most vile poetester had lampooned him, and how he had got him roaring in his bull. And Aesop dreamed, that, as he and the ancients' chiefs were lying on the ground, a wild ass broke loose, ran about, trampling and kicking in their faces."

This is a fairly interesting account of the actual events. And when Boyle answered the two critics in his *Dissertation Examin'd*, it was believed that he had scored final victory over them and that Temple's side had won. Boyle's victory is symbolised in his fixing both Wotton and Bentley together by a single lance:

"Bentley saw his fate approach, and, flanking down his arms close to his ribs, hoping to save his body, in went the point, passing through arm and side, nor stopped or spent its force, till it had also pierced the valiant Wotten, who, going to sustain his dying friend, shared his fate.....so was this pair of friends transfixed, till down they fell, joined in their lives, joined in their deaths."

Although the impartial Historian, the supposed Author of the *Battle*, makes pretence to objectivity, but his intention and sympathies are clearly discernible through the thin veil of the allegory. The death of Wotton and Boyle signifies vindication of the stand taken by temple in his *Essay*. The translation of literary differences into a physical warfare is really remarkable.

3. USE OF MOCK-HEROIC TECHNIQUE

If one studies the literary history of the seventeenth-century England, one thing will be easily discerned : the existence of the literary tradition of discoursing on serious matter in a light-hearted manner characterised by the use of "Insult, Buffoonery, Banter, Ridicule, Irony, Mockery, and bitter Railing." This tendency was natural outcome of the prevailing attitudes and the general atmosphere of the age. Things considered serious and beyond reproach in old days had lost their sanctity for a generation which had adopted the brilliance, elegance and mock refinement of the Restoration life and the tone of banter and ridicule, so graciously patronised by the Court, as its ideals. It lacked the moral earnestness and a sense of the heroic and the noble which, in the past, had inspired the epic compositions of Homer, Virgil and Tasso, and more recently, of Spenser and Milton. The result was that sanctified literary forms, previously used for the embodiment of great and dignified themes, were adopted by the seventeenth century writers for purpose of satiric ridicule and laughter.

Of all literary forms, the epic form was the most frequently used. But since the epic is by convention used for dignified themes of universal significance or for describing a heroic action, we use the terms "mock-heroic" or "mock-epic" while referring to works like Swift's *Battle of the Books* or Pope's *Rape of the Lock* in which the conventions of the epic are employed to describe a comparatively trivial theme, the purpose of course being to raise satiric laughter and to expose, by contrast, the pettiness of the theme. May be the mock-heroic became such a popular device because of the scope it offered for parody and also because its conventions allowed introduction of episodes which could be conveniently used by the satirists to achieve his satiric end. Consider, for instance, the insertion of the episode of the spider and the bee in the main body of the narrative in the *Battle of the Books*. It is beyond doubt a brilliant piece of satiric writing and through the debate of the two, Swift achieves his aim of disparaging the moderns and asserting the superiority and nobility of the ancients.

The tradition of the mock-heroic was not, however, a seventeenth century innovation ; it goes far back in history. The first extent mock-heroic is *Batrachomyomachia* (The Battle of the Frogs and Mice), which is a parody of Homer. Alessandro Tassoni's *Rape of the Bucket* (La Secchia Rapita), Vido's *Game*

of *Chess* and Boileau's *Lutrin* are all in the mock-epic style. Pope's *Rape of the Lock* also makes use of epic conventions and machinery to describe Lord Petre's cutting off of a piece of Arabella Fermor's lock.

Swift's *Battle of the Books* is a mock-heroic writing since the writer draws upon the epic conventions used by Homer, Virgil and other epic writers to describe a petty literary squabble. It is a remarkable blend of wit, humour, burlesque and satiric ingenuity.

Since the epic is always about a great heroic action, the epic writer in accordance with the set conventions invokes the Muse to come to his help in fulfilling the great task he has set himself. This practice is seen in Homer, in Virgil and also in Milton. Homer begins his *Iliad* with an invocation to the goddess of epic poetry to sing of "the anger of Peleus's son Achilles and its devastation." Virgil also observes this convention when he prays for divine help : "I pray for inspiration, to tell how it all began, and how the Queen of Heaven sustained such outrage to her majesty that in her indignation she forced a man famed for his true heartedness to tread that long path of adventure, and to face so many trials." Milton in *Paradise Lost*, invokes the Heavenly Muse to "instruct me, for thou know's ;" "What in me is dark Illumine, what is low raise and support." Swift uses the convention playfully. He implores supernatural help when he is about to begin the account of the battle fought between the books : "I must, after the example of other authors, petition for a hundred tongues, and mouths, and hands, and pens, which would all be too little to perform so immense a work." What Swift needs is not 'inner illumination' or 'divine inspiration' but hundred tongues to cry and countless pens to write an account of the silly, long drawn out wordy warfare between the ancients and the moderns.

One of the epic conventions is setting forth the theme at the beginning of the poem, to stress its universality and significance. *Iliad* is about the valour and passionate anger of Achilles and the havoc he wrought in the ranks of the Trojans. The theme of Virgil's *Aeneid* is no less significant ; it concerns the heroic adventures and glorious deeds of Aeneas. Milton sings of Man's Original Sin and his redemption through Christ. What is Swift's theme ? Mischievously Swift uses this epic convention to stress the fact of the triviality of the controversy. He is going to write about quarrels bred by beggary and want, pride and petty

jealousy, and which quarrels are to be seen among men and dogs alike. By thus equating dogs and warring moderns, Swift deals a crushing blow to the latter, though seemingly elaborating the nature of his theme.

The Conflict

In the manner of the conventional epic, Swift creates two armies of animated books to fight out the issue. The description of the individual warriors and army formations, of actual combats and arms, is couched in epic phraseology and makes for mirth. After the manner of Homer's and Virgil's heroes, the warriors in *The Battle* enter into "cabals and consults" to deliberate upon the present emergency and to work out military strategy. And again the description of important warriors on both sides is reminiscent of the muster roll of the fallen angels in Milton's *Paradise Lost* or the description of individual warriors in Book Seventh of Virgil's *Aeneid*. But whereas such description of heroic qualities of warriors and heroes involved in the war serves in Virgil to exalt the tone of the narrative, to lift the conflict to a higher plane, to prepare us for heroic action and to heighten our sense of the momentous nature of issues involved, in Swift this is not so. His mock-heroic account of the moderns and their fighting skill is calculated to be little, make the efforts and the cause of the moderns appear ridiculous. That there is no possibility of the moderns holding a serious threat to the superiority of their counterparts is clear from the very beginning ; their leaders are divided and their weapons and equipments are inferior to those of the ancients. While the cause of the ancients is espoused by Homer, Virgil, Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, Herodotus, Hippocrates etc., the cause of the moderns is championed by less illustrious names viz. Withers, Dryden, Cowley, Despreaux, Des Cartes, Gassendi, Paracelsus, Harvey and a multitude of obscurities. After having named some of the moderns, the Historian adds this observation on their remaining force : "The rest were a confused multitude, led by Scotus, Aquinas and Bellarmine ; of mighty bulk and stature, but without either arms, courage, or discipline. In the last place, came infinite swarms of calones, a disorderly rout by L'Estrange ; rogues and ragamuffins, that follow the camp for nothing but the plunder, all without coats to cover them."

Then again the combats between individual warriors are in epic tradition, but without the grandeur and awe of the combats between Achilles and Hector or between Aeneas and Turnus.

Swift's descriptions are in the nature of burlesque, though they ridicule not the original but the pretensions of the moderns. Homer, who leads the charge on behalf of the ancients, is depicted as a valiant fighter. His horse is as furious as the actions described in *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. He is opposed by five moderns, all of whom pale into insignificance before him and the resistance they put up is so below the claims staked by them that their behaviour excite nothing but derision, at times merriment. Gondibert, who "had made a vow to Pallas, that he would never leave the field till he had spoiled Homer of his armour," appears on "a staid, sober gelding not so famed for his speed as his docility in kneeling." Clearly he is no match for Homer and is killed by him. Similarly, Denham, Wesley, Perrault and Fontenelle meet their death at the hands of Homer. Lucan and Blackmore fight for a while, but later exchange arms. Swift's relish of the travesty is best seen in his description of Creech's pursuit of the phantom of Horace. "Glad was the cavalier to begin a combat with a flying foe, and pursued the image, threatening loud." The reference obviously is to his rather naive and unsuccessful attempt to translate Homer. The combat, though couched in epic phraseology, ends in an anti-climax, no bloodshed but peace, as Creech is disarmed by his own father and assigned to his repose. Pindar takes on Oldham, Afra Behn (who is described as an amazon) and Cowley, and once again victory falls to the side of the ancients. The combat between Pindar and Cowley is set in the tradition of great heroic fights. In describing the javelin of Pindar, Swift once again apes the epic convention. Homer and Milton magnify everything—arms, weapons, and heroic acts—to impart dignity and superhuman stature to their heroes. In *Paradise Lost*, we are told that the "massy, large and round" shield that hung on the shoulders of Satan was as big as the moon when viewed through a telescope. Swift gives us as an idea of the towering stature of Pindar by alluding to his giant javelin; it is "so large and weighty, that scarce could a dozen cavaliers, as cavaliers are in our degenerate days, could raise it from the ground; yet he (Pindar) threw it with ease." When we see Pindar and Cowley ready for the combat, we expect an action of epic dimensions, but instead of defiance, Cowley shows cowardice and supplicates for mercy.

The combat between Dryden and Virgil is interesting because the mock-serious tone of the narrative creates expectation of bloody battle only to belie them and with a smile we

realise how far the moderns fall short of the standards set by the ancients. Virgil appears in shining armour "completely fitted to his body." As he is looking for a worthy rival there issues from the opposite wing a "foe" upon a "sorrel gelding of a monstrous size." The foe is no other than Dryden (who has aped Virgil's manner in his translations and writings), who is ridiculed for wearing a helmet "nine times too large for the head." But the expected fight does not materialise, for Dryden soothes up the good ancient, calls him father, and establishes his relationship to Virgil. Then he proposes an exchange of armour, to which the opponent consents, though "his was of gold, and cost a hundred beeves, the other's (that is, Dryden's) but of rusty iron."

The fight of Boyle with Wotton and Bentley is also in the nature of an epic climax ; Like a lion, Boyle sweeps down upon the two offenders and transfixes them with a lance 'of wondrous Length and sharpness.'

The use of long-tail similes or Homeric simile is also in the epic tradition. Homer used the long simile to embellish his epics and to add the picturesque element to the narrative. This tradition was maintained by Virgil and Milton. Swift has also found occasions to introduce the long simile in the narrative of the *Battle*. Notice his use of the long simile while describing the nocturnal trip of Wotton and Bentley to attack "some neglected quarter of the ancients' army." They are likened to "two mongrel curs, whom native greediness and domestic want provoke and join in partnership, though fearful, nightly to invade the folds of some rich grazier, they, with tails depressed, and lolling tongues, creep soft and slow." Also notice the simile introduced by Swift to illustrate Boyle's fierce pursuit of Wotton. "As a young lion in the Libyan plains, or Araby desert, sent by his aged sire to hunt for prey, or health, or exercise, he scours along, wishing to meet some tiger from the mountains, or a furious boar ; if chance, a wild ass, with brayings importune, affronts his ear, the generous beast, though loathing to destain his claws with blood so vile, yet, much provoked at the offensive noise which Echo, foolish nymph, like her ill-judging sex, repeats much louder, and with more delight than Philomela's song, he vindicates the honour of the forest, and hunts the noisy long-eared animal."

The mock-epic tone of the descriptions is another feature

of the *Battle*. Trivial things are described in a language pompous and dignified, providing full play to mockery and satirical humour. The whole controversy between the ancients and the moderns is made to appear trivial from the very start, by putting humans and dogs on the same level. The motives that prompt a war in the commonwealth of the street and cause dogs to fight among themselves are also responsible for dissensions and disagreements in the commonwealth of learning. The trivial ancients-moderns squabble is described as "a long and obstinate war" in which both parties exhaust "whole rivulets of ink" to augment their virulence. Most humorous is the description of ink as a deadly and malignant liquor "compounded by the engineer who invented it, of two ingredients, which are, gall and copperas, by its bitterness and venom to suit, in some degree, as well as to forment, the genius of the combatants." And the descriptions of the trophies of war, hang out by each side to symbolise its supposed victory over the other, is again in the mock-epic tradition. These trophies are known to the world under several names as "disputes, arguments, rejoinders, brief considerations, answers, replies, remarks, reflections, objections, confutations."

Then also, following Homer, Virgil and Milton, Swift employs the grand style throughout the *Battle*. The grand style is the proper medium for narrating the heroic exploits of gigantic figures like Achilles, Hector, Aeneas and Satan and lends certain dignity and solemnity to the narrative. But when this solemn and grand style is employed for describing trivial things it only serves to emphasise the incongruous nature of the subject : it not only forces a perception of the triviality of the theme but also raises a satiric laugh. The best example of Swift's use of the epic style is seen in his description of the spider's web and his quarrel with the bee. The web is described as if it were an important, strong fortress of a powerful figure, though in reality it is a flimsy, airy thing. The spoils of the flies at the "gates of his palace" are like human bones before the cave of some giant. Every trick of the language is employed to give an inflated account of the cobweb. It is spoken of as a palace, a mansion, a fortress, a castle, a citadel, guarded with 'turnpikes and palisadoes.' The damage caused to the web as a result of the bee's alighting on of its outward walls is described in terms of a violent earthquake. The spider, feeling the convulsion, supposed at first that nature was approaching to her

final dissolution,' and on coming out from the centre beholds, 'the chasms, the ruins, and dilapidations of his fortress.' One is quietly amused when he notices the employment of similar phraseology in describing the war between the two parties.

Another epic feature found in the *Battle* is the use of the supernatural. In Homer and Virgil, gods and goddesses also take part in the action and frequently support, protect and encourage their favourite heroes. The supernatural machinery as introduced and used in the *Battle* is yet another proof of the mocking genius of Swift. On being informed by Fame about the violent feelings of the two parties warring on the earth, Jupiter convenes a meeting of the gods in the Milky Way. While in the hands of a lesser gifted satirist the whole episode might have deteriorated into an insipid imitation of the epic tradition, but Swift makes very effective use of the opportunity so offered to maul Bentley and Wotton and to denigrate them by showing them in league with and inspired by malicious deities like Momus and Criticism. Swift ridicules the critical faculty of both Wotton and Bentley by showing them as devout worshippers of Criticism, a goddess who has Ignorance and Pride as her companions. "The goddess herself had claws like a cat ; her head, and ears, and voice, resembled those of an ass : her teeth fallen out, her eyes turned inward, as if she looked only upon herself ; her diet was the overflowing of her own gall."

The satirical genius of Swift is also in evidence in the very effective and proper use of another epic tradition, namely, the ability of the supernatural characters to change their shapes and to assume false identity to suit their purpose. They can also transform the dead body of a warrior into a star or a swan or any other suitable phenomena. When Aesop assumed the shape of an ass in order to appear as a modern and thus avoid their wrath it is a very subtle dig at the moderns. The episode is more than a mere imitation of epic tradition. Similarly, when Cowley and Pindar are engaged in a combat and the former is killed by the latter, his torn body is washed by Venus in ambrosia and turned into a dove. Now Swift had certain respect for Cowley and he resolves an embarrassing situation by showing the transformation of Cowley's soul.

The *Battle of the Books* is thus a delightful mock-epic narrative. The imitation of the epic traditions provides full scope to Swift for a display of his satirical powers.

CHAPTER XII

THE SUPERNATURAL IN THE BATTLE

One of the elements borrowed by Swift from the epic proper is his use of the supernatural. The intervention by gods and goddesses in the affairs of human-beings was a characteristic of ancient epics. In Homer's *Iliad*, Zeus and other lesser divinities keep an anxious watch on the fortunes of the two warring parties, avert disasters to their favourites and generally play an active role in the settlement of crucial issues. Not only that, the divinities are themselves swayed by human passions ; like humans, they are smitten by jealousy as also hatch conspiracies and make friends or quarrel. Thus, in the first Book of the *Iliad*, it is a divided Olympus that Homer presents to us. Hera alleges that Zeus and Thetis are hatching something between them concerning the fate of the Trojan War, and Zeus has a hard time keeping unruly deities under control. The tradition was kept alive by Virgil, too. The Roman epic poet introduced the supernatural element to suggest the existence of another world, which is superior to and above the world of humans. More specifically, it is in the use of divine metamorphoses—a trick imitated in Swift in the *Battle*—that Virgil suggests his sense of different worlds. And if the Trojans do after all succeed in their effort it is not so much through their own strength as through divine help and divine encouragement. In fact the whole story of *Aeneid*, “is threaded along a series of divine appearances and admonitions, with their commands, advice, and explanations, and sometimes with their practical assistance.”

The Battle of the Books also makes generous use of the supernatural in unfolding the story of the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns. But the question is : does Swift use the supernatural merely to keep alive a time honoured tradition or that its use goes beyond this and helps the narrative ? It seems that Swift used the supernatural in response to the needs of the narrative. It helps him to provide a supernatural setting, disparage the moderns by showing their allegiance to malicious and spiteful deities and to explain away the

outcome of many single combats which otherwise may have proved embarrassing—For instance, the fight between Pindar and Cowley. Swift had a certain respect for Cowley, but the exigencies of the narrative demand his defeat. The satirist resolves the dilemma by resorting to the use of the supernatural. Cowley is vanquished, but a part of his soul is turned into a star as a result of the sympathies of the goddess Venus.

The supernatural is introduced at the very outset of the narrative. The setting is not the familiar landscape of the earth, but Mount Olympus, which was supposed to be sacred to Apollo and the Muses. Once the supernatural tone is established it is easy to transfer the scene to Heaven where Jupiter is holding a council in the Milky Way to discuss the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns. He declares his deep interest in what is going on down below in the regal library and thus prepares us for divine intervention in the actual battle.

The supernatural characters who appear before us in the heavenly council and later on in the battle-field are as partisan and passionate as those whom they support or oppose. Momus, the patron of the moderns, is a hideous deity and his concern for the moderns is loaded with ironical implications. Pallas, who signifies wisdom and learning, takes up the cause of the moderns. By counterpoising Momus against Pallas, Swift provides a meaningful commentary on the respective merits of the moderns and the ancients. To further disparage the moderns, Swift brings before our eyes some other deities—vile in appearance and hideous in intentions—who patronise the moderns. Foremost among them is a malignant deity called Criticism. The tendency among the moderns to censure literary works without much thinking is symbolised by the large number of half-devoured volumes that lie scattered about this horrible goddess. Not content with this, Swift pours more ridicule upon his opponents by creating certain abstract characters who embody the values of the moderns. “At her right hand sat Ignorance, her father, and husband, blind with rage ; at her left, Pride, her mother, dressing her up in the scraps of paper herself had torn. There was Opition, her sister, Light of foot, hood-winked, and headstrong, yet giddy, and perpetually turning. About her played her children, Noise and Impudence, Dulness and Vanity, Positiveness, Pedantry, and Ill-manners.” When Momus informs her of the difficult

position, the moderns are in, she immediately sets out to help them. In lines loaded with ridicule, Swift describes the singular method she adopts to inspire her favourite, Henry Wotton. "She took the ugliest of her monsters, full glutted with her spleen, and flung it invisibly into his mouth, which, flying straight up into his head, squeezed out his eye-balls, gave him a distorted look, and half overturned his brain."

The supernatural intervention is noticed in other events also. Thus when Wotton tries to drink the hallowed water of Helicon, he is frustrated in his attempt by Apollo. Thrice with profane hands he essays to raise the water to his lips, and thrice it slips through his fingers. Exasperated, he bends down to bring his mouth near the surface of water when Apollo intervenes and puts his shield between 'the modern and the fountain,' so that he draws up nothing but mud. Virgil agrees to exchange his golden armour with Dryden's rusty possession of iron because the goddess Diffidence comes unseen and casts a mist before the eyes of the ancient. Aesculapius saves the life of Blackmore from the spear of Lucan by turning off its point. Lucan takes no time in realising that some god is helping his adversary, and, since no human can contend against a god, he gives up the fight. Another supernatural being to take part in the fight is goddess Dulness. She forms a cloud into the shape of Homer and places it before Creech, who pursues it in vain. Temple is protected by Apollo and Pallas-Wotton's prayer to the gods is scattered by Fame, so that the deities grant only the first part of it and no harm comes to Temple.

The gods and goddesses of ancient epic poets are shown as having the power to assume any shape or form ; the deities of Swift are also endowed with similar power. When Criticism comes down on the earth to help the moderns in their fight against the ancients, she assumes the shape of a book to enter the regal library. Swift describes her transformation thus : "She therefore gathered up her person into an octavo compass : her body grew white and arid, and split in pieces with dryness ; the thick turned into pasteboard, and the thin into paper ; upon which her parents and children artfully strowed a black juice, or decoction of gall and soot, in form of letters."

And not only gods but the humans also can change their shape in *the Battle*. The reference is to Aesop, who, finding

himself in the uncomfortable company of moderns, assumes the shape of an ass to make good his escape.

Other instances of the use of the supernatural are the conversion of Denham into a star by Apollo and of Cowley into a dove by Venus. Swift describes the event thus : "..... one half (of Cowley's body) lay panting on the ground, to be trod in pieces by the horses' feet ; the other half was borne by the frightened steed through the field. This Venus took, washed it seven times in ambrosia, then struck it thrice with a sprig of amaranth ; upon which the leather grew round and soft, and the leaves turned into feathers, and being gilded before, continued gilded still ; so it became a dove, and she harnessed it to her chariot."

From the above, it is evident that Swift has made very effective use of the supernatural. The supernatural is made subservient to his satiric purpose, namely to disparage the moderns and to establish the superiority of the ancients.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FABLE OF THE BEE AND THE SPIDER

Of the five incidents discernible in the narrative of the *Battle* the most brilliantly handled and most significant is the fable or episode of the bee and the spider. Though it is not directly connected with the main narrative yet it is an essential part of the book : it is an imaginative allegorical representation of the literary squabble regarding the respective merits of the moderns and the ancients. The apt symbolism and the neatly summed up arguments add to the interest of the fable. Beyond doubt, Swift establishes the identity of interest and nature between the moderns and the spider on the one hand and the ancients and the bee on the other.

The bee and the spider episode is introduced immediately after having introduced the controversy going on between the two literary factions. Already we have been made aware of the unavailing nature of the efforts of the moderns to overthrow the ancients and to put themselves in a superior position, and Swift completes his satiric commentary by contrasting the sweet and noble nature of the bee, symbolising the ancients, with the spider's love of dirt and his vain-glorious nature.

The episode is introduced as a 'material accident' which sparks off the battle. In a corner of the library, there lived a spider, "swollen up to the first magnitude by the destruction of infinite numbers of flies, whose spoils lay scattered before the gates of his palace, like human bones before the cave of some giant." Into his web a bee happened to enter by mistake, which event resulted in severe damage being caused to the 'palace' of the spider. Terrified and much amazed by sudden disaster, the spider issued forth, beheld his web in a ruined condition, and saw the bee sitting at some distance, with the remnants of the cobweb still sticking to his wings. A torrent of curses flowed from the spider. He calls the bee a rogue, a vagabond "without house or home," a plunderer who robs nature and flowers of honey and lives upon the booty so obta-

ined. The bee, in his reply, attacks the vanity and pretensions of the spider. His argument can be summed up thus : no doubt there is evidence of much labour in the construction of the web on which the spider prides himself but its material is insubstantial, being nothing but the dirt spun out by the spider from his entrails. And if "we may judge of the liquor in the vessel, by what issues out, you possess a good plentiful store of dirt and poison in your breast." The bee does not spin out from his dirty entrails ; on the contrary he uses his knowledge and discrimination to select proper flowers and gathers honey from his own efforts. So, in short, the question is :

".....whether is the nobler being of the two, that which by a lazy contemplation of four inches round, by an overweening pride, which feeding and engendering on itself, turns all into venom, producing nothing at all, but flybane and a cobweb ; or that which, by an universal range, with long search, much study, true judgment, and distinction of things, bring home honey and wax ?" Clearly Swift is here commenting on the method of the moderns who claimed admiration for their laboured ingenuity and who showed contempt for the classical qualities of ancients' books.

Lest the allegorical significance be lost upon any reader, Swift takes on chances and makes the issue explicit by introducing Aesop as an interpreter. He listens to the arguments of both the parties and at once notices a close parallel between the spider and moderns. "For, pray, gentlemen, was ever anything so modern as the spider in his air, his turns, and his paradoxes ?" Like the moderns, the spider boasts of his self-sufficiency and scorns assistance from without. The bee does not pretend to be self-sufficient ; he depends upon the bounty of nature to build his hive and fills it with honey through hard labour and search. The difference is that while the spider produces poison, the bee provides the humanity with honey and wax.

The episode has been widely admired for its brilliant effect and artistic economy. Ricardo Quintana says : "Throughout this incident the artistic economy is something to marvel at : there is not a superfluous phrase ; from line to line the meaning is drawn out with a logical inevitability that makes of words the exact symbol of thought."

The satiric purpose of the fable is to show pretentious

nature of the moderns. The first blow is struck when the spider is established as representative of the latter day men of letters. In his method and substance the spider is seen as a brethren of the moderns. The spider despises the bee's fruitful search among the flowers and terms his as an act of plunder: likewise, the moderns show an unthinking disregard for the classical rules and values so studiously acquired and practised by the ancients. The real sting lies in the application of images of physical disgust to the spider, and through him to the moderns. What the moderns offer by way of writing is nothing else but a noxious overflow of their poisonous nature. The point is driven home when Aesop says: "Erect your schemes with as much method and skills as you please; yet if the materials be nothing but dirt, spun out of your entrails (the guts of modern brains) the edifice will conclude at last in a cobweb..... For anything else of genuine that the moderns may pretend to, I cannot recollect; unless it be a large vein of wrangling and satire, much of a nature and substance with the spider's poison."

The fable, as some critics have rightly pointed out, is Swift's real contribution to the ancient-modern controversy.

CHAPTER XIV

CRITICAL SUMMARY OF THE BATTLE OF THE BOOKS

Structurally, *the Battle of the Books* is comprised of five clearly distinguishable incidents. The main body of the satire is however preceded by the Bookseller's notice to the reader and a very brief Preface. The Bookseller's notice is regarding the authorship of the satire and the circumstances leading to its composition. It is short and direct and contrasts happily with the bewildering variety of prefaces, notices, dedications etc. That precede the main narrative of *A Tale of a Tub*. In the Preface, the author declares his satirical intention of bringing under his lash those who are light of brain and do not know how to manage their stock with husbandry ; for, "wit, without knowledge, being a sort of cream, which gathers in a night to the top, and, by a skilful hand, may be soon whipped into froth ; but, one scummed away, what appears underneath will be fit for nothing but to be thrown to the hogs."

The main narrative purports to be a full and impartial account of the battle fought between the ancients and the moderns in the regal library, as a result of the mismanagement of the librarian, Bentley, who shows undue favour to the moderns and purposely hems in ancient books by their counterparts. The author makes a mock pretence to impartiality when he says, "Now, because the talk of this battle is so fresh in everybody's mouth, and the expectation of the town so great to be informed in the particulars, I, being possessed of all qualifications requisite in an historian, and retained by neither party, have resorted to comply with the urgent importunity of my friends, by writing down a full impartial account thereof."

FIRST INCIDENT

The first of the five incidents that form of the main body of the satire, concerns the dispute between the ancients and the moderns for the right to live on the highest peak of Parnassus. Before touching the actual dispute, the author refers to the intercine warfare that goes on among the dogs of the street. The republic of the dogs remain in a peaceful state after a full meal,

but "civil broils arise among them when it happens for one great bone to be seized on by some leading dog, who either divides it among the few or keeps it to himself" and as a result of the jealousy aroused in other dogs, "the whole commonwealth of that street" is reduced to a manifest state of war, every dog matching his valour against that of another. After having thus established want and lust as the main causes of quarrels, the satirist turns to the disputes between the inhabitants of the Parnassus. The moderns live on a lower peak. They cannot rise high through their own efforts and cannot see the ancients enjoying a superior position. Jealousy and heart-burning lie at the bottom of their hostile attitude towards the superior beings. An emissary is sent up to the ancients to ask them to remove themselves to a lower position and surrender the top peak to the moderns, else the latter will "come with shovels and mattocks, and level the said hill as low as they shall think it convenient." The impertinence of the moderns amuses the ancients. Not only have they expected such message from a colony whom they have permitted to settle down as their neighbours ; they have also not expected them to show such fool-hardiness as to think of cutting down the hill which is an entire rock. Their advice therefore is that the moderns should rather try to raise their own side of the hill, to which they "would not only give license but also largely contribute." The controversy is carried on in an animated vein and many "arguments, rejoinders, brief considerations, answers, replies, remarks, reflections, objections, confutations" are issued by either party to substantiate its claim of victory.

Soon the controversy takes a serious turn when the animated books of St. Jame's library take up the argument. Haunted as they are by most disorderly spirits, the controversial books of the library soon organise themselves into two mutually hostile camps. On one side are Plato, Homer, and other ancients, while on the other are a host of writers prominent among whom are Decartes, Scotus, Dryden, Withers and Hobbes. The unfriendly attitude of the librarian, Bentley, towards the ancients does much to foment the trouble. He plants the ancients individually among a host of moderns, much to the inconvenience of the former.

The news that the moderns are planning to open a hostile

front against the ancients leaks out and the ancients on their part decide to take all necessary measures to protect themselves. Though few in number, yet their better organisation and superior armour put them in a position of vantage as compared to their adversaries. The first incident ends with Temple, the patron of Swift and a staunch champion of the ancients, playing a leading part in organising the defence of his party against the vile ambitions of the moderns.

SECOND INCIDENT

The second incident concerns the episode of the spider and the bee which is remarkable for its artistic economy and satiric efficacy. When the controversy regarding the respective merits of the ancients and the moderns is going on in the library of St. James, a maternal incident falls out. ".....upon the highest Corner of a large Window, there dwelt a certain Spider, swollen up to the first Magnitude by the Destruction of infinite Numbers of Flies, whose spoils lay scattered before the Gates of his Palace, like human Bones before the Cave of some Giant." As it happens, a bee unknowingly blunders into the spider's web, which, in mock-epic phraselogy, is described as a 'mansion,' a palace, a citadel, and a fortress. Though the bee manages to escape from the web, but in the process the web is broken. "The spider within, feeling the terrible convulsion, supposed at first that nature was approaching to her final dissolution ; or else, that Beelzebub. with all his legions, was come to revenge the death of many thousands of his subjects, whom this enemy had slain and devoured." At last the spider issues forth and beholds the "chasms, the ruins, and dilapidations of his fortress." He is beside himself with rage when he sees the culprit who is responsible for this damage. The infuriated spider pours scorn upon the bee, calls him names, and levels many accusations against him, the chief being that, while the spider himself is furnished with a native stock and spins his web out of himself, the bee depends upon flowers and nature to provide himself with food. The bee, therefore, is a universal plunderer, "a vagabond without house or home, without stock or inheritance, born to no possession.....but a pair of wings and a drone-pipe." To this charge the bee makes a fitting reply. While the bee visit flowers and gardens to collect honey and "whatever I collect thence enriches myself, without the least injury to their beauty, their smell, or their taste," the spider's

web is no more than 'store of dirt' enriched by 'sweepings exhaled from belew.' In short, the question is :

"Whether is the nobler being of the two, that which, by a lazy contemplation of four inches round, by an overweening pride, which, feeding and engendering on itself, turns all into venom, producing nothing at all, but flybane and a cobweb ; or that which, by an universal range, with long search, must study, true judgment, and distinction of things, brings home honey and wax ?"

The allegorical significance of the episode is made explicit through Aesop. The bee stands for the ancients, while the spider is the representative of the moderns.

THIRD INCIDENT

The third incident takes us to the battlefield. The two parties having decided to make a trial of strength, an account of the heroes and leading warriors on either side becomes a necessity. On the side of the ancients are such luminaries as Homer, Pindar, Virgil, Herodotus, Lucan, Euclid, Plato, Aristotle and of course Temple. Though the ancients are numerically speaking at a disadvantage, but their discipline and superior skill give them an edge over their rivals. The moderns are supported by Tasso, Dryden, Withers, Cowley, Descartes, Harvey, Denham, Gondibert and a host of others. It is only in the fitness of things that Milton and Tasso, the epic poets, should lead the horse ; the light horses are commanded by Cowley and Despreaux ; the bowmen appear under the leadership of Descartes, Gassendi and Hobbes ; Paracelsus "brought a squadron of stink-pot-fingers from the snowy mountains of Rhaetia ;" Harvey leads a body of dragoons, and behind him follow several bodies "of heavy-armed foot, all mercenaries, under the ensigns of Guicciardini, Davila, Polydore, Virgil, Buchanan, Mariana, Cambden, and others." The rest, Swift remarks satirically, "were a confused multitude, led by Scotus, Aquinas, and Bellarme ; of mighty bulk and stature, but without either arms, courage, or discipline."

The single combats are unevenly balanced and inspite of the author's profession of impartiality, his sympathy for the cause of modern cannot be missed. The names mentioned on the side of the moderns are minor figures and no match for the ancients, who are invariably superior, much too superior at

that, as warriors. Homer appears on a furious horse, which symbolises his power as an epic poet, and without much efforts slays no less than five moderns one after another. His victims are Gondibert, Denham, Wesley, Perrault and Fontenelle. Pindar kills many opponents including Oldham, Afra Behn and Cowley. The last named is changed into a dove after his death and harnessed by Venus in her chariot. Lucan all but kills his modern counterpart, Blackmore, who is saved by Aesculapius. Lucan perceives that some god is protecting him ; therefore he gives up the fight and exchanges his bridle for a pair of spurs.

The most interesting encounter takes place between Virgil and Dryden. Here Swift is at his liveliest and his language carries too many punches for poor Dryden ! Virgil appears on the scene riding a mettled horse, his shining armour completely fitted to his body. While he is looking for an adversary worthy of his valour, a foe emerges from the opposite side "upon a sorrel gelding of a monstrous size." For all his monstrous size the horse is in actuality old and lean and his speed is less than his noise. Just when the two warriors are about to clash, the modern desires a parley and on lifting up his helmet he is recognised as the renowned *Dryden*. In a language packed with satirical punches, Swift describes the disappointment of Virgil. "The brave ancient suddenly started, as one possessed with surprise and disappointment together ; for the helmet was nine times too large for the head, which appeared situate far in the hinder part, even like the lady in a lobster, or like a mouse under the canopy of state, or like a shrivelled beau, from within the pent-house of a modern periwig ; and the voice was suited to the visage, sounding weak and remote." The satiric implication is that though Dryden tried his hand at heroic verse but his capacity was not equal to the task ; the heroic mould ill-suited his genius. Dryden is unwilling to have a trial of strength with Virgil, calls him father and humbly proposes an exchange of armour, a sign of amity. Misled, Virgil accepts to exchange his golden armour with the rusty one of Dryden.

FOURTH INCIDENT

The fourth incident falls in the middle of the third, just after the marshalling of the rival forces and before the commencement of the actual battle. The scene is shifted from the battlefield to the Milky Way, where the gods have assembled to hear from Jupiter the account of the controversy going on

down below in the library. Momus, the patron of the moderns, makes an excellent speech to support the cause of his devotees. The ancients are well served by Pailas. The assembly being so violently divided in its opinion, Jupiter commands Mercury to bring him the book of fate to know beforehand the outcome of the battle. He reads of decree silently and refuses to divulge it to others.

This worries Momus, who is apprehensive of the fate of his devotees. His meeting with Criticism, a hideous-looking goddess, and appeal to interfere in the war in favour of the moderns, is described in a language cluttered with nauseous images which cause revulsion and, by association, arouse disgust for the moderns. And when she lapses into a soliloquy, Swift utilises the opportunity to refer to the pedantry and shallow critical acumen of the moderns. "Tis I," says Criticism, "who give wisdom to infants and idiots ; by me, children grow wiser than their parents ; by me, beaux become politicians, and school-boys judges of philosophy ; by me, sophisters debate, and conclude upon the depths of knowledge ; and coffee-house wits, instinct by me, can correct an author's style, and display his minutest errors, without understanding a syllable of his matter, or his language. By me, striplings spend their judgment as they do their estate, before it comes into their hands." To such satire there can be no answer. With swift unerring strokes Swift demolishes the self-erected image of the learned modern. In the light of the soliloquy of Criticism, the attempt of the moderns to criticise the ancients and claim superiority over them, appear almost frivolous.

FIFTH INCIDENT

The fifth incident is an allegorical version of the supposed victory of Charles Boyle, who wrote in defence of Temple's praise of the ancients, over Wotton and Bentley. Enraged at Wotton's profane attack on Temple, Apollo approaches young Boyle and entrusts to him the task of taking immediate revenge. Wotton runs away out of fear, but Boyle pursues him like a daring lion. In the meanwhile Bentley happens to pass by the same way, his hands carrying the spoils of Aesop and Philaris, both of whom are so dear to Boyle. The young warrior engages Bentley in a deadly combat. With a single lance, Boyle fixes both Wotton and Bentley together : "so was this

pair of friends transfix'd, till down they fell, joined in their lives, joined in their deaths."

Thus ends the account of the battle of the books. The victory belongs to the ancients, even though the author does not state it directly.

CHAPTER XV

CRITICAL OPINIONS ON THE BATTLE OF THE BOOKS

(1)

“The controversy has now lost its interest, and Temple’s ill-judged defence of the genuineness of the ‘Epistles of Philaris’ does not concern us. Swift assumes the genuineness of the letters ; but the merit of the work lies in its satirical power.

“The piece is mainly an attack on pedantry, in which it is argued that invention may be weakened by overmuch learning We need not imagine that Swift held too seriously the views on the subject of the controversy expressed in this fragment : Temple, we are told, received a slight graze ; and says the publisher, the manuscript, ‘being in several places imperfect, we cannot learn to which side the victory fell.’ The piece was largely inspired by the desire to assist his patron ; but besides being a brilliant attack on his opponents, it abounds in satire of a more general nature, and its interest for us is not affected by the fact that Temple was on the wrong side.”

G. A. Aitken : *Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. IX*

(2)

“*The Battle of the Books* is perhaps the least interesting, as well as the least characteristic, of Swift’s longer satires..... It has an air of real detachment of *A Modest proposal*—which is unusual in him. He makes the satirist’s formal pretense to impartiality.....the joke here is that we are supposed to see at once how exceedingly partial the author is, though he is only writing, as so many claimed to be, through the “urgent Importance” of his friends.....

“The satiric method, too, seems almost groping, considering the apparent ease and confidence with which the other early work, *A Tale of a Tub*, is written and shaped despite its far more complex theme. *The Battle* is clever but episodic, with allegories, parody, mock-heroic, each one neat in itself but all

loosely strung together, and the satire is, for Swift, unusually simple and direct. It is not his normal habit to show his hand so plainly as he does here, with his opening allegory of the twin peaks of Parnassus and the causes of war, which are poverty and want on the part of the aggressor. As for the mock-heroic of the battle in St. James's Library, this was a mode of writing which at the end of the seventeenth century not only gave a clear warning of satiric intention but indicated pretty precisely how the satire would go ; it is a far cry from this to the business-like approach of *A Modest Proposal*, or the factual sober air of *Gulliver's Travels*.

Kathleen Williams : *Jonathan Swift and the Age of Compromise.*

(3)

“The eagerness of the discussion is characteristic of a time at which the modern spirit was victoriously revolting against the ancient canons of taste and philosophy. At first sight, we might therefore expect the defenders of antiquity to be on the side of authority. In fact, however, the argument, as Swift takes it from Temple, is reversed. Temple's theory, so far as he had any consistent theory, is indicated in the statement that the moderns gathered “all their learning from books in universities.” Learning, he suggests, may weaken invention ; and people who trust to the charity of others will always be poor. Swift accepts and enforces this doctrine. *The Battle of the Books* is an expression of that contempt for pedants which he had learnt in Dublin, and which is expressed in the ode to the Athenian Society.....”

“But Swift probably knew and cared little for the merits of the controversy. He expressed his contempt with characteristic vigour and coarseness ; and pleasures in his display of exuberant satirical power are not injured by his obvious misconception of the merits of the case. The unflagging spirit of the writing, the fertility and ingenuity of the illustrations, do as much as can be done to give lasting vitality to what is radically (to my taste at least) a rather dreary form of wit. *The Battle of the Books* is the best of the travesties. Nor in the brilliant assault upon great names do we at present see anything more than the buoyant consciousness of power, common in the unsparing judgments of youth, nor edged as yet by any real bitterness. Swift has found out that the world is full of humbugs ; and

goes forth hewing and hacking with super-abundant energy...."

Leslie Stephen ; *Swift* (E. M. L. Series)

(4)

"In origin this is a gay intervention in the excited dispute which had arisen out of an essay by Temple on *Ancient and Modern Learning*, in which he had deprecated the pride of the moderns in their scientific achievements. These had, he said, diverted philosophy from its more important concern, with ethics, wherein the ancients still far excelled them. In effect Temple's essay was a cogent criticism of the nascent dogma of automatic progress. But Temple was not an exact scholar..... and he was unduly contemptuous of the scientific movement..."

"Swift, sympathetic to Temple and his argument, enjoyed himself poking fun at Bentley and Wotton in a burlesque of Homer....., It was not a serious contribution to the controversyBut it was a brilliant preliminary canter of his comic Pegasus, and it sparkles still."

John Murray : *Swift* (British Council Pamphlet)

(5)

"The fable and the interpretation of it are Swift's real contribution to the debate between the Ancients and the Moderns ; and it is not surprising that a hundred and fifth year later, when the debate had taken another form, Swift's phrase "sweetness and light" was carried as a banner by a young apostle of culture as he advanced against the hosts of the Philistines."

Herbert Davis : *The Satire of J. Swift.*

(6)

".....it is not an ordinary historical account at all but an extended allegory in the form of an epic fragment : its episodes and the terms in which these episodes are dealt with—chiefly, the kind of language and imagery brought into play—are determined by the conditions of allegory and epic.....The positive elements in the *Battle of the Books* are unmistakable : the pedantry and ill-manners of Wotton and Bentley, the shortcomings of the moderns, the sweetness and light of a culture that is neither old nor modern but perennial."

Ricardo Quintana : *Swift : An Introduction.*

(7)

"To what degree does his satire suffer by modern approval of

Wotton and Bentley ? Not greatly, it would seem. However dubiously we may sit down to *The Battle of the Books*, our resistance is straightway set at naught by Swift's satiric artistry Though the justice of the years has long since removed the dunces' caps from the heads of Wotton and Bentley, their simulacra that indulge in such ridiculous antics throughout. Swift's piece will to the end of time remain contemptible in a very real sense."

Ricardo Quintana : *The Mind and Art of Swift.*
(8)

"*The Battle of the Books* is fired by an anger still aimed at a special object—at certain forms of intellectual ambition and error. Pedanticism, false erudition, rabid controversy, are connected with the thesis of the 'Moderns,' the insolent, mean enemies of the glory of the Ancients ; the despiser of Phalaris. Bentley—who yet was not wrong—is overwhelmed with classical contumely ; the verve of the pamphlet, full as it is of allusions to the images and devices of the epic, is another example of the fecundity at the epoch of the mock-heroic theme."

Louis Cazamian : *A History of English Literature.*

**TEXT
OF
SWIFT'S BATTLE OF THE BOOKS**

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THE BOOKSELLER TO THE READER

The following discourse, as it is unquestionably of the same author, so it seems to have been written about the same time with the former ; I mean the year 1697, when the famous dispute was on foot about ancient and modern learning. The controversy took its rise from an essay of Sir William Temple's upon that subject, which was answered by W. Wotton, B. D., with an Appendix by Dr. Bentley, endeavouring to destroy the credit of Aesop and Phalaris for authors, whom Sir William Temple had, in the essay before mentioned, highly commended. In that appendix, the doctor falls hard upon a new edition of Phalaris, put out by the Honourable Charles Boyle, now Earl of Orrery, to which Mr. Boyle replied at large, with great learning and wit ; and wit ; and the doctor voluminously rejoined. In this dispute, the town highly resented to see a person of Sir William Temple's character and merits roughly used by the two reverend gentlemen aforesaid, and without any manner of provocation. At length, there appearing no end of the quarrel, our author tells us, that the BOOKS in St. Jame's Library, looking upon themselves as parties principally concerned, took up the controversy, and came to a decisive battle ; but the manuscript, by the injury of fortune or weather, being in several places imperfect, we cannot learn to which side the victory fell.

I must warn the reader to beware of applying to persons what is here meant only of books, in the most literal sense. So, when Virgil is mentioned, we are not to understand the person of a famous poet called by the name ; but only certain sheets of paper, bound up in leather, containing in print the works of the said poet : and so of the rest.

THE PREFACE OF THE AUTHOR

SATIRE is a sort of glass, wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own ; which is the chief reason for that kind reception it meets in the world, and that so very few are offended with it. But, if it should happen otherwise, the danger is not great ; and I have learned from experience never to apprehend mischief from those under-

standings I have been able to provoke : for anger and fury, though they add strength to the sinews of the body, yet are found to relax those of the mind, and to render all its efforts feeble and impotent.

There is a brain that will endure but one scumming ; let the owner gather it with discretion, and manage his little stock with husbandry ; but, of all things, let him beware of bringing it under the lash of his betters, because that will make it all bubble into impertinence, and he will find no new supply. Wit, without knowledge, being a sort of cream, which gathers in a night to the top, and, by a skilful hand, may be soon whipped into froth ; but once scummed away, what appears underneath will be fit for nothing but to be thrown to the hogs.

A FULL AND TRUE ACCOUNT OF THE BATTLE FOUGHT LAST FRIDAY, ETC.

Whoever examines with due circumspection into the *Annual Records of Time* will find it remarked, that war is the child of pride, and pride the daughter of riches :—the former of which assertions may be soon granted, but one cannot so easily subscribe to the latter ; for pride is nearly related to beggary and want, either by father or mother, and sometimes by both : and, to speak naturally, it very seldom happens among men to fall out when all have enough ; invasions usually travelling from north to south, that is to say, from poverty upon plenty. The most ancient and natural grounds of quarrels are lust and avarice ; which, though we may allow to be brethren, or collateral branches of pride, are certainly the issues of want. For, to speak in the phrase of writers upon the politics, we may observe in the republic of dogs, which, in its original, seems to be an institution of the many, that the whole state is ever in the profoundest peace after a full meal ; and that civil broils arise among them when it happens for one great bone to be seized on by some leading dog, who either divides it among the few, and then it falls to an oligarchy. or keeps it to himself, and then it runs up to a tyranny. The same reasoning also holds place among them in those dissensions we behold upon a turgescency in any of their females. For the right of possession lying in common (it being impossible to establish a property in so delicate a case), jealousies and suspicions do so abound, that the whole commonwealth of that street is reduced to a manifest state of war, of every citizen against every citizen, till some one, of more courage, conduct or fortune than the rest seizes and enjoys the prize ; upon which naturally arises plenty of heart-burning, and envy, and snarling against the happy dog. Again, if we look upon any of these republics engaged in a foreign war, either of invasion or defence, we shall find the same reasoning will serve as to the grounds and occasions of each ; and that poverty or want in some degree or other (whether real or in opinion, which makes no alteration in the case), has a great share, as well as pride, on the part of the aggressor.

Now, whoever will please to take this scheme, and either reduce or adapt it to an intellectual state, or commonwealth of learning, will soon discover the first ground of disagreement between the two great parties at this time in arms, and may form just conclusions upon the merits of either cause. But the issue or events of this war are not so easy to conjecture at ; for the present quarrel is so inflamed by the warm heads of either faction, and the pretensions somewhere or other so exorbitant, as not to admit the least overtures of accommodation. This quarrel first began (as I have heard it affirmed by an old dweller in the neighbourhood) about a small spot of ground, lying and being upon one of the two tops of the hill Parnassus ; the highest and largest of which had, it seems, been time out of mind in quiet possession of certain tenants, called the Ancients, and the other was held by the Moderns. But these, disliking their present station, sent certain ambassadors to the Ancients, complaining of a great nuisance ; how the height of that part of Parnassus quite spoiled the prospect of theirs, especially toward the east ; and therefore, to avoid a war, offered them the choice of this alternative, either that the Ancients would please to remove themselves and their effects down to the lower summity, which the Moderns would graciously surrender to them, and advance in their place ; or else that the said Ancients will give leave to the Moderns to come with shovels and mattocks, and level the said hill as low as they shall think it convenient. To which the Ancients made answer, how little they expected such a message as this from a colony whom they had admitted, out of their own free grace, to so near a neighbourhood. That, as to their own seat, they were aborigines of it, and therefore to talk with them of a removal or surrender, was a language they did not understand. That if the height of the hill on their side shortened the prospect of the Moderns, it was a disadvantage they could not help, but desired them to consider, whether that injury (if it be any) were not largely recompensed by the shade and shelter it afforded them. That as to the levelling or digging down, it was either folly or ignorance to propose it, if they did, or did not know, how that side of the hill was an entire rock, which would break their tools and hearts, without any damage to itself. That they would therefore advise the Moderns rather to raise their own side of the hill, than dream of pulling down that of the Ancients ; to the former of which they would not only give licence, but also

largely contribute. All this was rejected by the Moderns with much indignation, who still insisted upon one of the two expedients ; and so this difference broke out into a long and obstinate war, maintained on the one part by resolution, and by the courage of certain leaders and allies : but on the other, by the greatness of their number, upon all defeats, affording continual recruits. In this quarrel whole rivulets of ink have been exhausted, and the virulence of both parties enormously augmented. Now, it must be here understood, that ink is the great missive weapon in all battles of the learned, which, conveyed through a sort of engine called a quill, infinite numbers of these are darted at the enemy by the valiant on each side, with equal skill and violence, as if it were an engagement of *porcupines*. This malignant liquor was compounded, by the engineer who invented it, of two ingredients, which are, gall and copperas, by its bitterness and venom to suit, in some degree, as well as to foment, the genius of the combatants. And as the Grecians, after an engagement, when they could not agree about the victory, were wont to set up trophies on both sides, the beaten party being content to be at the same expense, to keep itself in countenance, (a laudable and ancient custom, happily revived of late, in the art of war), so the learned, after a sharp and bloody dispute, do, on both sides, hang out their trophies too, whichever comes by the worst. These trophies have largely inscribed on them the merits of the cause ; a full impartial account of such a *battle*, and how the victory fell clearly to the party that set them up. They are known to the world under several names ; as disputes, arguments, rejoinders, brief considerations, answers, replies, remarks, reflections, objections, confutations. For a very few days they are fixed up in all public places, either by themselves or their representatives, for passengers to gaze at ; whence the chiefest and largest are removed to certain magazines they call libraries, there to remain in a quarter purposely assigned them, and thenceforth begin to be called books of Controversy.

In these books is wonderfully instilled and preserved the spirit of each warrior while he is alive ; and after his death his soul transmigrates thither to inform them. This at least is the more common opinion ; but I believe it is with libraries as with other cemeteries, where some philosophers affirm that a certain spirit, which they call *brutum hominis*, hovers over the

monument, till the body is corrupted and turns to dust or to worms, but then vanishes or dissolves; so, we may say, a restless spirit haunts over every book, till dust or worms have seized upon it; which to some may happen in a few days, but to others later: and therefore books of controversy, being, of all others, haunted by the most disorderly spirits, have always been confined in a separate lodge from the rest; and for fear of a mutual violence against each other, it was thought prudent by our ancestors to bind them to the peace with strong iron chains. Of which invention the original occasion was this:—When the works of Scotus first came out, they were carried to a certain library, and had lodgings appointed them; but this author was no sooner settled than he went to visit his master Aristotle; and there both concerted together to seize Plato by main force, and turn him out from his ancient station among the divines, where he had peaceably dwelt near eight hundred years. The attempt succeeded, and the two usurpers have reigned ever since in his stead: but, to maintain quiet for the future, it was decreed, that all *polemics* of the larger size should be held fast with a chain.

By this expedient, the public peace of libraries might certainly have been preserved, if a new species of controversial books had not arisen of late years, instinct with a more malignant spirit, from the war above mentioned between the learned about the higher summit of *Parnassus*.

When these books were first admitted into the public libraries, I remember to have said, upon occasion, to several persons concerned, how I was sure they would create broils wherever they came, unless a world of care were taken: and therefore I advised that the champions of each side should be coupled together, or otherwise mixed, that, like the blending of contrary poisons, their malignity might be employed among themselves. And it seems I was neither an ill prophet nor an ill counsellor; for it was nothing else but the neglect of this caution which gave occasion to the terrible fight that happened on Friday last between the ancient and modern books in the king's Library. Now, because the talk of this battle is so fresh in everybody's mouth, and the expectation of the town so great to be informed in the particulars, I, being possessed of all qualifications requisite in an historian, and retained by neither party, have resolved to comply with the urgent importunity of my friends, by writing down a full impartial account thereof.

The guardian of the regal library, a person of great valour, but chiefly renowned for his humanity, had been a fierce champion for the Moderns ; and, in an engagement upon Parnassus, had vowed, with his own hands to knock down two of the Ancient chiefs, who guarded a small pass on the superior rock ; but, endeavouring to climb up, was cruelly obstructed by his own unhappy weight and tendency towards his centre : a quality to which those of the Modern party are extreme subject; for, being light-headed, they have, in speculation, a wonderful agility, and conceive nothing too high for them to mount ; but, in reducing to practice, discover a mighty pressure about their posteriors and their heels. Having thus failed in his design, the disappointed champion bore a cruel rancour to the Ancients; which he resolved to gratify by showing all marks of his favour to the books of their adversaries, and lodging them in the fairest apartments ; when, at the same time, whatever book had the boldness to own itself for an advocate of the Ancients was buried alive in some obscure corner, and threatened, upon the least displeasure, to be turned out of doors. Besides, it so happened that about this time there was a strange confusion of place among all the books in the library ; for which several reasons were assigned. Some imputed it to a great heap of learned dust, which a perverse wind blew off from a shelf of Moderns into the keeper's eyes. Others affirmed he had a humour to pick the worms out of the schoolmen, and swallow them fresh and fasting ; whereof some fell upon his spleen, and some climbed up into his head, to the great perturbation of both. And lastly, others maintained, that, by walking much in the dark about the library, he had quite lost the situation of it out of his head ; and therefore in replacing his books, he was apt to mistake, and clap Des Cartes next to Aristotle ; poor Plato had got between Hobbes and the Seven Wise Masters, and Virgil was hemmed in with Dryden on one side, and Withers on the other.

Meanwhile those books that were advocates for the Moderns, chose out one from them to make a progress through the whole library, examine the number and strength of their party, and concert their affairs. This messenger performed all things very industriously, and brought back with him a list of their forces, in all fifty thousand, consisting chiefly of light-horse, heavy-armed foot, and mercenaries ; whereof the foot were in general but sorrily armed and worse clad ; their horses large,

but extremely out of case and heart ; however, some few, by trading among the Ancients, had furnished themselves tolerably enough.

While things were in this ferment, discord grew extremely high, hot words passed on both sides, and ill blood was plentifully bred. Here a solitary Ancient, squeezed up among a whole shelf of Moderns, offered fairly to dispute the case, and to prove by manifest reason that the priority was due to them from long possession, and in regard of their prudence, antiquity, and, above all, their great merits toward the Moderns. But these denied the premises, and seemed very much to wonder, how the Ancients could pretend to insist upon their antiquity, when it was so plain (if they went to that) that the Moderns were much the more ancient of the two. As for any obligations they owed to the Ancients, they renounced them all. 'T's true', said they, 'we are informed, some few of our party have been so mean to borrow their subsistence from you ; but the rest, infinitely the greater number, (and especially we French and English,) were so far from stooping to so base an example, that there never passed, till this very hour, six words between us. For our horses were of our own breeding, our arms of our own forging, and our clothes of our own cutting out and sewing.' Plato was by chance up on the next shelf, and observing those that spoke to be in the ragged plight mentioned a while ago, their jades lean and foundered, their weapons of rotten wood, their armour rusty, and nothing but rags underneath, he laughed a loud, and in his pleasant way swore, by—, he believed them.

Now, the Moderns had not proceeded in their late negotiation with secrecy enough to escape the notice of the enemy. For those advocates who had begun the quarrel, by setting first on foot the dispute of precedence, talked so loud of coming to a battle, that Sir William Temple happened to overhear them, and gave immediate intelligence to the Ancients, who, thereupon drew up their scattered troops together, resolving to act upon the defensive ; upon which, several of the Moderns fled over to their party, and among the rest Temple himself. This Temple, having been educated and long conversed among the Ancients, was, of all the Moderns, their greatest favourite, and became their greatest champion.

Things were at this crisis when a material accident fell out.

For upon the highest corner of a large window there dwelt a certain spider, swollen up to the first magnitude by the destruction of infinite numbers of flies, whose spoils lay scattered before the gates of his palace, like human bones before the cave of some giant. The avenues to his castle were guarded with trunpikes and palisadoes, all after the modern way of fortification. After you had passed several courts you came to the centre, wherein you might behold the constable himself in its own lodgings, which had windows fronting to each avenue, and ports to sally out, upon all occasions of prey or defence. In this mension he had for some time dwelt in peace and plenty, without danger to his person by swallows from above, or to his palace by brooms from below ; when it was the pleasure of fortune to conduct thither a wandering bee, to whose curiosity a broken pane in the glass had discovered itself, and in he went ; where, expatiating a while, he at last happened to alight upon one of the outward walls of the spider's citadel ; which, yielding to the unequal weight, sunk down to the very foundation. Thrice he endeavoured to force his passage, and thrice the centre shook. The spider within, feeling the terrible convulsion, supposed at first that nature was approaching to her final dissolution ; or else, that Beelzebub, with all his legions, was come to revenge the death of many thousands of his subjects, whom his enemy had slain and devoured. However, he at length valiantly resolved to issue forth and meet his fate. Meanwhile the bee had acquitted himself of his toils, and, posted securely at some distance, was employed in cleansing his wings, and disengaging them from the ragged remnants of the cobweb. By this time the spider was adventured out, when, beholding the chasms, the ruins, and dilapidations of his fortress, he was very near at his wit's end ; he stormed and swore like a madman, and swelled till he was ready to burst. At length, casting his eye upon the bee, and wisely gathering causes from events, (for they knew each other by Sight,) ; 'A plague split you,' said he 'for a giddy son of a whore ; is it you with a vengeance, that have made this litter here ? Could not you look before you, and be d—d ? do you think I have nothing else to do (in the devil's name) but to mend and repair after your arse ?—'Good words, friend, said the bee (having now pruned himself, and being disposed to droll) : I'll give you my hand and word to come near your kennel no more ; I was never in such a confounded pickle since I was

born.'—'Sirrah,' replied the spider, 'if it were not for breaking an old custom in our family, never to stir abroad against an enemy, I should come and teach you better manners.'—'I pray have patience,' said the bee, 'or you will spend your substance, and, for aught I see, you may stand in need of it all, toward the repair of your house.'—'Rogue, rogue,' replied the spider, yet methinks you should have more respect to a person whom all the world allows to be so much your betters.'—'By my troth,' said the bee, 'the comparison will amount to a very good jest; and you will do me a favour to let me know the reasons that all the world is pleased to use in so hopeful a dispute.' At this the spider, having swelled himself into the size and posture of a disputant, began his argument in the true spirit of controversy, with resolution to be heartily scurrilous and angry to urge on his own reasons, without the least regard to the answers or objections of his opposite; and fully predetermined in his mind against all conviction.

'Not to disparage myself,' said he, 'by the comparison with such a rascal, what art thou but a vagabond without house or home, without stock or inheritance? born to no possession of your own, but a pair of wings and drone-pipe. Your livelihood is a universal plunder upon nature; a freebooter over fields and gardens; and, for the sake of stealing, will rob a nettle as easily as a violet. Whereas I am a domestic animal, furnished with a native stock within myself. This large castle (to show my improvements in the mathematics) is all built with my own hands, and the materials extracted altogether out of my own person.'

'I am glad,' answered the bee, 'to hear you grant at least that I am come honestly by my wings and my voice; for then, it seems, I am obliged to Heaven alone for my fights and my music; and Providence would never have bestowed on me two such gifts, without designing them for the noblest ends. I visit indeed all the flowers and blossoms of the field and garden; but whatever I collect thence enriches myself, without the least injury to their beauty, their smell, or their taste. Now, for you and your skill in architecture and other mathematics, I have little to say: in that building of yours there might, for aught I know, have been labour and method enough; but, by woeful experience for us both, it is too plain, the materials are naught; and I hope you will henceforth take warning, and consider duration and matter, as well as method and art. You boast

indeed of being obliged to no other creature, but of drawing and spinning out all from yourself ; that is to say, if we may judge of the liquor in the vessel by what issues out, you possess a good plentiful store of dirt and position in your breast ; and, though I would by no means lessen or disparage your genuine stock of either, yet I doubt you are somewhat obliged, for an increase of both, to a little foreign assistance. Your inherent portion of dirt does not fail of acquisitions, by sweepings exhaled from below ; and one insect furnishes you with a share of poison to destroy another. So that, in short, the question comes all to this ; whether is the nobler being of the two, that which, by a lazy contemplation of four inches round, by an overweening pride, feeding and engendering on itself, turns all into excrement and venom, producing nothing at all, but flybane and a cobweb ; or that which, by an universal range, with long search much study, true judgement, and distinction of things, brings home honey and wax.

This dispute was managed with such eagerness, clamour, and warmth, that the two parties of books, in arms below, stood silent a while, waiting in suspense what would be the issue, which was not long undermined : for the bee, grown impatient at so much loss of time, fled straight away to a bed of roses, without looking for a reply, and left the spider, like an orator, collected in himself, and just prepared to burst out.

It happened upon this emergency that Aesop broke silence first. He had been of late most barbarously treated by a strange effect of the regent's humanity, who had torn off his title-page, sorely defaced one half of his leaves, and chained him fast among a shelf of Moderns. Where, soon discovering how high the quarrel was likely to proceed, he tried all his arts, and turned himself to a thousand forms. At length, in the borrowed shape of an ass, the regent mistook him for a Modern ; by which means he had time and opportunity to escape to the Ancients, just when the spider and the bee were entering into their contest ; to which he gave his attention with a world of pleasure, and, when it was ended, swore in the loudest key, that in all his life he had never known two cases so parallel and adapt to each other, as that in the window and this upon the shelves. 'The disputants,' said he, 'have admirably managed the dispute between them, have taken in the full strength of all that is to be said on both sides, and exhausted the substance of every argument *pro* and *con*. It is

but to adjust the reasonings of both to the present quarrel, then to compare and apply the labours and fruits of each, as the bee has learnedly deduced them, and we shall find the conclusion fall plain and close upon the Moderns and us. For pray, gentlemen, was ever anything so modern as the spider in his air, his turns and his paradoxes ? He argues in the behalf of you his brethren and himself with many boastings of his native stock and great genius ; that he spins and spits wholly from himself, and scorns to own any obligation or assistance from without. Then he displays to you his great skill in architecture and improvement in the mathematics. To all this the bee, as an advocate retained by us the Ancients, thinks fit to answer, that, if one may judge of the great genius or inventions of the Moderns by what they have produced, you will hardly have countenance to bear you out in boasting of either. Erect your schemes with as much method and skill as you please; yet, if the materials be nothing but dirt, spun out of your own entrails (the guts of modern brains), the edifice will conclude at last in a cobweb, the duration of which, like that of other spiders' webs, may be imputed to their being forgotten, or neglected, or hid in a corner. For anything else of genuine that the Moderns may pretend to, I cannot recollect : unless it be a large vein of wrangling and satire, much of a nature and substance with the spider's poison ; which, however they pretend to spit wholly out of themselves, is improved by the same arts, by feeding upon the insects and vermin of the age. As for us the Ancients, we are content, with the bee, to pretend to nothing of our own beyond our wings and our voice : that is to say, our flights and our language. For the rest, whatever we have got has been by infinite labour and search, and ranging through every corner of nature ; the difference is, that, instead of dirt and poison, we have rather chosen to fill our hives with honey and wax ; thus furnishing mankind with the two noblest of things, which are sweetness and light.

‘It is wonderful to conceive the tumult arisen among the books upon the close of this long descant of Aesop : both parties took the hint, and heightened their animosities so on a sudden, that they resolved it should come to a battle. Immediately the two main bodies withdrew, under their several ensigns, to the farther parts of the library, and there entered into cabals and consults upon the present emergency. The Moderns were in very warm debates upon the choice of their leaders ; and

nothing less than the fear impending from their enemies, could have kept them from mutinies upon this occasion. The difference was greatest among the horse, where every private trooper pretended to the chief command, from Tasso and Milton to Dryden and Withers. The light-horse were commanded by Cowley and Despreaux. There came the bowmen under their valiant leaders, Des Cartes, Gassendi, and Hobbes ; whose strength was such that they could shoot their arrows beyond the atmosphere, never to fall down again, but turn like that of Evander, into meteors ; or, like the cannon ball, into stars. Paracelsus brought a squadron of stinkpot-flingers from the snowy mountains of Rhaetia. There came a vast body of dragoons, of different nations, under the leading of Harvey, their great aga : part armed with scythes, the weapons of death ; part with lances and long knives, all steeped in poison : part shot bullets of a most malignant nature, and used white powder, which infallibly killed without report. There came several bodies of heavy-armed foot, all mercenaries, under the ensigns of Guicciardini, Davila, Polydore Virgil, Buchanan, Mariana, Camden, and others. The engineers were commanded by Regiomontanus and Wilkins. The rest was a confused multitude, led by Scotus, Aquinas, and Bellarmine ; of mighty bulk and stature, but without either arms, courage, or discipline. In the last place came infinite swarms, of calones, a disorderly rout led by L'Estrange ; rogues and regamuffins, that follow the camp for nothing but the plunder, all without coats to cover them.

The army of the Ancients was much fewer in number ; Homer led the horse, and Pindar the lighthorse ; Euclid was chief engineer ; Plato and Aristotle commanded the bowmen ; Herodotus and Livy the foot ; Hippocrates the dragoons. The allies, led by Vossius and Temple, brought up the rear.

All things violently tending to a decisive battle, Fame, who much frequented, and had a large apartment formerly assigned her in the regal library, fled up straight to Jupiter, to whom she delivered a faithful account of all that passed between the two parties below ; for among the gods, she always tells truth. Jove, in great concern, convokes a council in the Milky Way. The senate assembled, he declares the occasion of convening them ; a bloody battle just impendent between two mighty armies of Ancient and Modern creatures, called books, wherein the celestial interest was but too deeply concerned. Momus,

the patron of the Moderns, made an excellent speech in their favour, which was answered by Pallas, the protectress of the Ancients. The assembly was divided in their affections ; when Jupiter commanded the book of fate to be laid before him. Immediately were brought by Mercury three large volumes in folio, containing memoirs of all things past, present, and to come. The clasps were of silver double gilt, the covers of celestial turkey leather, and the paper such as here on earth might pass almost for vellum. Jupiter, having silently read the decree, would communicate the import to none, but presently shut up the book.

Without the doors of this assembly, there attended a vast number of light, nimble gods, menial servants to Jupiter : these are his ministering instruments in all affairs below. They travel in a caravan, more or less together, and are fastened to each other, like a link of galley-slaves, by a light chain, which passes from them to Jupiter's great toe ; and yet, in receiving or delivering a message, they may never approach above the lowest step of his throne, where he and they whisper to each other through a large hollow trunk. These deities are called by mortal men accidents or events ; but the gods call them second causes. Jupiter having delivered his message to a certain number of these divinities, they flew immediately down to the pinnacle of the regal library, and, consulting a few minutes, entered unseen, and disposed the parties according to their orders.

Meanwhile, Momus, fearing the worst, and calling to mind an ancient prophecy, which bore no very good face to his children the Moderns, bent his flight to the region of a malignant diety called Criticism. She dwelt on the top of a snowy mountain in Nova Zembla ; there Momus found her extended in her den, upon the spoils of numberless volumes, half devoured. At her right hand sat Ignorance, her father and husband, blind with age ; at her left, Pride, her mother, dressing her up in the scraps of paper herself had torn. There was Opinion, her sister, light of foot, hood-winked, and headstrong, yet giddy, and perpetually turning. About her played her children, Noise and Impudence, Dulness and Vanity, Positiveness, Pedantry, and Ill-manners. The goddess herself had claws like a cat ; her head, and ears, and voice, resembled those of an ass ; her teeth fallen out before, her eyes turned inward, as if she looked only upon herself ; her diet was the overflowing of her own gall ; her spleen was so large as to stand prominent,

like a dug of the first rate ; nor wanted excrescencies in form of teats, at which a crew of ugly monsters were greedily sucking; and, what is wonderful to conceive, the bulk of spleen increased faster than the sucking could diminish it. ‘Goddess,’ said Momus, ‘can you sit idly here while our devout worshippers, the Moderns, are this minute entering into a cruel battle, and perhaps now lying under the swords of their enemies ? Who then thereafter will ever sacrifice or build altars to our divinities ? Haste, therefore, to the British isle, and, if possible, prevent their destruction ; while I make factions among the gods, and gain them over to our party.

Momus, having thus delivered himself, stayed not for an answer, but left the goddess to her own resentment. Up she rose in a rage, and, as it is the form upon such occasions, began a soliloquy : ‘T is I,’ (said she), ‘who give wisdom to infants and idiots ; by me children grow wiser than their parents, by me beaux become politicians, and schoolboys judges of philosophy ; by me sophisters debate, and conclude upon the depths of knowledge ; and coffeehouse wits, instinct by me, can correct an author’s style and display his minutest errors, without understanding a syllable of his matter or his language ; by me, striplings spend their judgement, as they do their estate, before it comes into their hands. ‘T is I who have deposed wit and knowledge from their empire over poetry, and advanced myself in their stead. And shall a few upstart Ancients dare to oppose me ?—But come, my aged parents and you, my children dear, and thou my beauteous sister ; let us ascend my chariot, and haste to assist our devout Moderns, who are now sacrificing to us a hecatomb, as I pereceive by that grateful smell which from thence reaches my nostrils.

The goddess and her train, having mounted the chariot, which was drawn by tame geese, flew over infinite regions, shedding her influence in due places, till at length she arrived at her beloved island of Britain ; but in hovering over its metropolis, what blessings did she not let fall upon her seminaries of Gresham and Covent Garden ! And now she reached the fatal plain of St. James’s Library, at what time the two armies were upon the point to engage ; where, entering with all her caravan unseen, and landing upon a case of shelves, now desert, but once inhabited by a colony of virtuosoes, she stayed a while to observe the posture of both armies.

But here the tender cares of a mother began to fill her

thoughts and move in her breast ; for at the head of a troop of Modern bowmen, she cast her eyes upon her son Wotton, to whom the fates had assigned a very short thread. Wotton, a young hero, whom an unknown father of mortal race begot by stolen embraces with this goddess. He was the darling of his mother above all her children, and she resolved to go and comfort him. But first, according to the good old custom of deities, she cast about to change her shape, for fear the divinity of her countenance might dazzle his mortal sight, and overcharge the rest of his senses. She therefore gathered up her person into an octavo compass ; her body grew white and arid, and split in pieces with dryness ; the thick turned into paste-board, and the thin into paper ; upon which her parents and children artfully strewed a black juice, or decoction of gall and soot, in form of letters ; her head, and voice, and spleen, kept their primitive form, and that which before was a cover of skin did still continue so. In this guise, she marched on towards the Moderns, undistinguishable in shape and dress from the divine B-ntley, Wotton's dearest friend. 'Brave W-tt-n', said the goddess, 'why do our troops stand idle here, to spend their present vigour and opportunity of the day ? Away, let us haste to the generals, and advise to give the onset immediately.' Having spoke thus, she took the ugliest of her monsters, full glutted from her spleen, and flung it invisibly into his mouth, which, flying straight up into his head, squeezed out his eyeballs, gave him a distorted look, and half overturned his brain. Then she privately ordered two of her beloved children, Dulness and Ill-Manners, closely to attend his person in all encounters. Having thus accoutréed him, she vanished in a mist, and the hero perceived it was the goddess his mother.

The destined hour of fate being now arrived, the fight began ; whereof, before I dare adventure to make a particular description, I must, after the example of other authors, petition for a hundred tongues, and mouths, and hands, and pens, which would all be too little to perform so immense a work. Say, goddess, that presidest over history, who it was that first advanced in the field of battle ! Paracelsus, at the head of his dragoons, observing Galen in the adverse wing, darted his javelin with a mighty force, which the brave Ancient received upon his shield, the point breaking in the second fold. . . .

*Hic pauca
desunt.*

They bore the wounded aga on their shields to his chariot

Desunt . . . nonnulla.

Then Aristotle, observing Bacon advance with a furious mien, drew his bow to the head, and let fly his arrow, which missed the valiant Modern, and went hizzing over his head ; But Des Cartes it hit ; the steel point quickly found a defect in his headpiece, it pierced the leather and the paste-board, and went in at his right eye. The torture of the pain whirled the valiant bowman round till death, like a star of superior influence, drew him into his own vortex.

*Ingens hiatus
hic in MS.*

when Homer appeared at the head of the cavalry, mounted on a furious horse, with difficulty managed by the rider himself, but which no other mortal durst approach : he rode among the enemy's ranks, and bore down all before him. Say, goddess, whom he slew first and whom he slew last ! First, Gondibert advanced against him, clad in heavy armour, and mounted on a staid, sober gelding, not so famed for his speed as his docility in kneeling, whenever his rider would mount or alight. He had made a vow to Pallas that he would never leave the field till he had spoiled Homer of his armour : madman, who had never once seen the wearer, nor understood his strength ! Him Homer overthrew, horse and man, to the ground, there to be trampled and choked in the dirt. Then with a long spear, he slew Denham, a stout Modern, who from his father's side derived his lineage from Apollo, but his mother was of mortal race. He fell, and bit the earth. The celestial part Apollo took, and made it a star ; but the terrestrial lay wallowing upon the ground. Then Homer slew W-sl-y (Wesley) with a kick of his horse's heel ; he took Perrault by mighty force out of his saddle, then hurled him at Fontenelle, with the same blow dashing out both their brains.

On the left wing of the horse Virgil appeared, in shining armour, completely fitted to his body : He was mounted on a dapple-gray steed, the slowness of whose pace was an effect of

the highest mettle and vigour. He cast his eye on the adverse wing, with a desire to find an object worthy of his valour, when, behold, upon a sorrel gelding of a monstrous size appeared a foe, issuing from among the thickest of the enemy's squadrons ; but his speed was less than his noise ; for his horse, old and lean, spent the dregs of his strength in a high trot, which, though it made slow advances, yet caused a loud clashing of his armour terrible to hear. The two cavaliers had now approached within the throw of a lance, when the stranger desired a parley, and, lifting up the vizor of his helmet, a face hardly appeared from within, which, after a pause, was known for that of the renowned Dryden. The brave Ancient suddenly started, as one possessed with surprise and disappointment together, for the helmet was nine times too large for the head, which appeared situate far in the hinder part, even like the lady in a lobster, or like a mouse under a canopy of state, or like a shrivelled beau from within the penthouse of a modern periwig ; and the voice was suited to the visage, sounding weak and remote. Dryden, in a long harangue, soothed up the good Ancient ; called him father, and, by a large deduction of genealogies, made it plainly appear that they were nearly related. Then he humbly proposed an exchange of armour, as a lasting mark of hospitality between them. Virgil consented (for the goddess Diffidence came unseen, and cast a mist before his eyes), though his was of gold. and cast a hundred beeves, the other's but of rusty iron. However, this glittering armour became the Modern yet worse than his own. Then they agreed to exchange horses ; but when it came to the trial, Dryden was afraid, and utterly unable to mount.

. *Alter hiatus
in MS*

Lucan appeared upon a fiery horse of admirable shape, but headstrong, bearing the rider where he list over the field ; he made a mighty slaughter among the enemy's horse ; which destruction to stop, Blackmore, a famous Modern (but one of the mercenaries), strenuously opposed himself and darted his javelin with a strong hand, which, falling short of its mark, struck deep in the earth. Then Lucan threw a lance ; but Aesculapius came unseen, and turned off the point. 'Brave Modern,' said Lucan, 'I perceive some god protects you, for never did

my arm so deceive me before ; but what mortal can contend with a god ? Therefore, let us fight no longer, but present gifts to each other.' Lucan then bestowed the Modern a pair of spurs, and Blackmore gave Lucan a bridle.

*Pauca de-
sunt.*

Creech : but the goddess Dulness took a cloud, formed into the shape of Horace, armed and mounted, and placed in a flying posture before him. Glad was the cavalier to begin a combat with a flying foe, and pursued the image, threatening aloud, till at last it led him to the peaceful bower of his father, Ogleby, by whom he was disarmed, and assigned to his repose.

Then Pindar slew—, and—, and Oldham, and—, and Afra the Amazon, light of foot ; never advancing in a direct line, but wheeling with incredible agility and force, he made a terrible slaughter among the enemy's light horse. Him when Cowley observed, his generous heart burnt within him, and he advanced against the fierce Ancient, imitating his address, his pace and career, as well as the vigour of his horse and his own skill would allow. When the two cavaliers had approached within the length of three javelins, first Cowley threw a lance, which missed Pindar, and, passing into the enemy's ranks, fell ineffectual to the ground. Then Pindar darted a javelin so large and weighty that scarce a dozen cavaliers, as cavaliers are in our degenerate days, could raise it from the ground ; yet he threw it with ease, and it went, by an unerring hand, singing through the air ; nor could the Modern have avoided present death, if he had not luckily opposed the shield that had been given him by Venus. And now both heroes drew their swords ; but the modern was so aghast and disordered that he knew not where he was ; his shield dropped from his hands ; thrice he fled, and thrice he could not escape ; at last he turned, and lifting up his hand in the posture of a suppliant 'Godlike Pindar,' said he, 'spare my life, and possess my horse, with these arms, beside the ransom which my friends will give when they hear I am alive and your prisoner.' 'Dog !' said Pindar, 'let your ransom stay with your friends ; but your carcase shall be left for the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field.' With that he raised his sword, and, with a mighty stroke, cleft the wretched Modern in twain, the sword pursuing the blow ; and one half lay panting on the ground, to be

trod in pieces by the horses' feet ; the other half was borne by the frightened steed through the field. This Venus took, washed it seven times in ambrosia, then strick it thrice with a sprig of amaranth ; upon which the leather grew round and soft, and the leaves turned into feathers, and being gilded before, continued gilded still ; so it became a dove, and she harnessed it to her chariot.

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*Hiatus valde
deflendus in
MS.*

Day being far spent, and the numerous forces of the Moderns half inclining to a retreat, there issued forth from a squardon of their heavy-armed foot, a captain, whose name was B-ntl-y (Bentley), the Moderns ; the most deformed of all the Moderns ; tall, but without shape or comeliness ; large, but without strength or proportion. His armour was patched up of a thousand incoherent pieces, and the sound of it, as he marched, was loud and dry, like that made by the fall of a sheet of lead, which an Etesian wind blows suddenly down from the roof of some steeple. His helmet was of old rusty iron, but the vizor was brass, which, tainted by his breath, corrupted into copperas, nor wanted gall from the same fountain ; so that, whenever provoked by anger or labour, an atramentous quality, of most malignant nature, was seen to distil from his lips. In his right hand he grasped a flail, and (that he might never be unprovided of an offensive weapon) a vessel full of ordure in his left. Thus completely armed, he advanced with a slow and heavy pace where the Modern chiefs were holding a consult upon the sum of things ; who, as he came onwards, laughed to behold his crooked leg and humped shoulder, which his boot and armour, vainly endeavouring to hide, were forced to comply with and expose. The generals made use of him for his talent of railing, which, kept within government, proved frequently of great service to their cause, but, at other times, did more mischief than good ; for at the least touch of offence, and often without any at all, he would, like a wounded elephant, convert it against his leaders. Such, at this juncture, was the disposition of Bentley ; grieved to see the enemy prevail, and dissatisfied with everybody's conduct but his own. He humbly gave the Modern generals to understand that he conceived, with great submission, they were all a pack of rogues, and fools, and sons of whores, and d—d cowards, and confounded logger-

heads, and illiterate whelps, and nonsensical scoundrels ; that if himself had been constituted general, those presumptuous dogs, the Ancients, would, long before this, have been beaten out of the field. ‘You,’ said he, ‘sit here idle ; but when I or any other valiant Modern, kill an enemy, you are sure to seize the spoil. But I will not march one foot against the foe till you all swear to me that whomever I take or kill, his arms I shall quietly possess.’ Bentley having spoken thus, Scaliger, bestowing him a sour look : ‘Miscreant prater !’ said he, ‘eloquent only in thine own eyes, thou railest without wit, or truth, or discretion. The malignity of thy temper perverteth nature, thy learning makes thee more barbarous, thy study of humanity more inhuman ; thy converse among poets, more grovelling, miry, and dull. All arts of civilizing others render thee rude and untractable ; courts have taught thee ill manners, and polite conversation has finished thee a pedant. Besides, a greater coward burdeneth not the army. But never despond ; I pass my word, whatever spoil thou takest shall certainly be thy own ; though, I hope, that vile carcase will first become a prey to kites and worms.’

B-ntl-y (Bentley) durst not reply, but, half choked with spleen and rage, withdrew, in full resolution performing some great achievement. With him, for his aid and companion, he took his beloved Wotton : resolving by policy or surprise to attempt some neglected quarter of the Ancient’s army. They began their march over carcases of their slaughtered friends ; then to the right of their own forces, then wheeled northward, till they came to Aldrovandus’s tomb, which they passed on the side of the declining sun. And now they arrived, with fear, towards the enemy’s out-guards ; looking about, if haply they might spy the quarters of the wounded, or some straggling sleepers, unarmed, and remote from the rest. As when two mongrel curs, whom native greediness and domestic want provoke and join in partnership, though fearful, nightly to invade the folds of some rich grazier, they, with tails depressed, and lolling tongues, creep soft and slow ; meanwhile, the conscious moon, now in her zenith, on their guilty heads darts perpendicular rays ; nor dare they bark, though much provoked at her resplendent visage, whether seen it puddle by reflection, or in sphere direct ; but one surveys the region round, while t’other scouts the plain, if haply to discover, at distance

from the flock, some carcase half devoured, the refuse of gorged wolves, or ominous ravens. So marched this lovely, loving pair of friends, nor with less fear and circumspection, when, at distance, they might perceive two shining suits of armour hanging upon an oak, and the owners not far off in a profound sleep. The two friends drew lots, and the pursuing of this adventure fell to Bentley ; on he went, and in his van Confusion and Amaze, while Horror and Affright brought up the rear. As he came near, behold two heroes of the Ancients' army, Phalaris and Aesop, lay fast a sleep ; Bentley would fain have dispatched them both, and, stealing close, aimed his flail at Phalaris's breast. But then the goddess Affright, interposing, caught the Modern in her icy arms, and dragged him from the danger she foresaw; both the dormant heroes happened to turn at the same instant, though soundly sleeping, and busy in a dream. For Phalaris was just that minute dreaming how a most vile poetaster had lampooned him, and how he had got him roaring in his bull. And Aesop dreamed that, as he and the Ancient chiefs were lying on the ground, a wild ass broke loose, ran about, trampling and kicking, and dunging in their faces. Bentley, leaving the two heroes asleep, seized on both their armours, and withdrew in quest of his darling Wotton.

He, in the meantime, had wandered long in search of some enterprise, till at length he arrived at a small rivulet that issued from a fountain hard by, called, in the language of mortal men, Helicon. Here he stopped, and, parched with thirst, resolved to allay it in this limpid stream. Thrice with profane hands he essayed to raise the water to his lips, and thrice it slipped all through his fingers. Then he stooped prone on his breast, but, ere his mouth had kissed the liquid crystal, Apollo came, and in the channel held his shield betwixt the Modern and the fountain, so that he drew up nothing but mud. For, although no fountain on earth can compare with the clearness of Helicon, yet there lies at bottom a thick sediment of slime and mud ; for so Apollo begged of Jupiter, as a punishment to those who durst attempt to taste it with unbarrowed lips, and for a lesson to all not to draw too deep or far from the spring.

At the fountain-head, Wotton discerned two heroes ; the one he could not distinguish, but the other was soon known for Temple, general of the allies to the Ancients. His back was turned, and he was employed in drinking large draughts in his helmet from the fountain, where he had withdrawn himself to

rest from the toils of the war. Wotton, observing him, with quacking knees and trembling hands, spoke thus to himself: 'O that I could kill this destroyer of our army, what renown should I purchase among the chiefs! But to issue out against him, man for man, shield against shield, and lance against lance, what Modern of us dare? For he fights like a god, and Pallas or Apollo are ever at his elbow. But, O mother! if what Fame reports be true, that I am the son of great a goddess, grant me to hit Temple with this lance, that the stroke may send him to hell, and that I may return in safety and triumph, laden with his spoils.' The first part of his prayer the gods granted at the intercession of his mother and of Momus; by the rest by a perverse wind sent from Fate, was scattered in the air. Then Wotton grasped his lance, and, brandishing it thrice over his head, darted it with all his might, the goddess, his mother, at the same time, adding strength to his arm. Away the lance went hizzing, and reached even to the belt of the averted Ancient, upon which lightly grazing, it fell to the ground. Temple neither felt the weapon touch him, nor heard it fall; and Wotton might have escaped to his army, with the honour of having remitted his lance against so great a leader unrevenged; but Apollo, enraged that a Javelin, flung by the assistance of so foul a goddess, should pollute his fountain, put on the shape of—, and softly came to young Boyle, who then accompanied Temple: He pointed first to the lance, then to the distant Modern that flung it, and commanded the young hero to take immediate revenge. Boyle, clad in a suit of armour which had been given him by all the gods, immediately advanced agaiast the trembling foe, who now fled before him. As a young lion in the Libyan plains, or Araby desert, sent by his aged sire to hunt for prey, or health, or exercise, he scours along, wishing to meet some tiger from the mountains, or a furious boar; if chance, a wild ass, with brayings importune, affronts his ear, the generous beast, through loathing to distain his claws with blood so vile, yet, much provoked at the offensive noise which Echo, foolish nymph, like her ill-judging sex, repeats much louder, and with more delight than Philomela's song, he vindicates the honour of the forest, and hunts the noisy long-eared animal. So Wotton fled, so Boyle pursued. But Wotton, heavy armed and slow of foot, began to slack his course, when his lover Bentley, appearing returning laden with the spoils of the two sleeping Ancients. Boyle observed him well, and soon discovering the helmet and

shield of Phalaris, his friend, both which he had lately with his own hands new polished and gilt, Rage sparkled in his eyes, and, leaving his pursuit after Wotton, he furiously rushed on against this new approacher. Fain would he be revenged on both ; but both now fled different ways ; and, as a woman in a little house that gets a painful livelihood by spinning, if chance her geese be scattered o'er the common, she courses round the plain from side to side, compelling here and there the stragglers to the flock ; they cackle loud, and flutter o'er the campaign ; So Boyle pursued, so fled this pair of friends : finding at length their flight was vain, they bravely joined, and drew themselves in phalanx. First Bentley threw a spear with all his force, hoping to pierce the enemy's breast : but Pallas came unseen, and in the air took off the point, and clapped on one of lead, which, after a dead bang against the enemy's shield, fell blunted to the ground. Then Boyle, observing well his time, took a lance of wondrous length and sharpness ; and, as this pair of friends compacted, stood close side to side, he wheeled him to the right, and, with unusual force, darted the weapon. B-ntl-y saw his fate approach, and flanking down his arms close to his ribs, hoping to save his body, in went the point, passing through arm and side, nor stopped or spent its force till it had also pierced the valiant Wotton, who going to sustain his dying friend, shared his fate. As when a skilful cook has trussed a brace of woodcocks, he, with iron skewer pierces the tender sides of both, their legs and wings close pinioned to their ribs : so was this pair of friends transfixed, till down they fell, joined in their lives, joined in their deaths, so closely joined that Charon would mistake them both for one, and waft them over Styx for half his fare. Farewell, beloved and loving pair ! Few equals have you left behind : and happy and immortal shall you be, if all my wit and eloquence can make you.

And, now

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· · ·

Desunt caetera.

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NOTES

**SRI PRATAP COLLEGE LIBRARY
SRINAGAR (Kashmir)**

DATE LOANED

Class No. _____ Book No. _____

This book may be kept for 14 days. An over - due charge will be levied at the rate of 10 Paise for each day the book is kept over - time.

THE BATTLE OF THE BOOKS

NOTES

The Bookseller to the Reader

In a short notice, written for the benefit of the reader, the publisher explains the circumstances which led to the composition of the *Battle of the Books*. He refers to the controversy which took a fierce turn with the publication in 1697, of Sir William Temple's essay on *Ancient and Modern Learning*, in which he had helped up Aesop and Phalaris as examples of excellence in writing. Almost unknowingly Temple had committed himself to an indefensible position, and when the rejoinder was issued by William Wotton in 1694—*Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning*—it delivered a severe blow to Swift's patron's reputation as a scholar. The crisis was reached when, to the second edition of the *Reflections*, put out in 1697, Bentley added an appendix calling in question the genuineness of the *Epistles* of Phalaris and *Fables* of Aesop, both of which had been cited by Temple for outstanding literary merit. To Swift it appeared that his patron had been most ungraciously attacked by two unmannerly pedants, who deserved an effective answer. He, therefore, penned the satire, the *Battle of the Books*, in which he turned with 'concentrated fury' upon the antagonists of Temple and made short work of their claim to literary scholarship. The Bookseller mentions all these circumstances to place the book in its historical setting and to give it a topical interest.

Authorship of the Notice—Some critics have raised doubts regarding the authorship of the publisher's notice to the readers. Somehow they maintain that Swift himself wrote these lines and passed them off in the name of the book-seller. The fact that the book-seller does not reveal his own name is by itself not sufficient to justify such a view. The approach of Henry Craik appears more balanced. He examines the style of the main

Note—To facilitate easy reference to Text, number of page has been mentioned, since line numbers have inadvertently been missed in Text.

text and that of the notice and finds nothing common in them. Therefore he concludes that the book-seller might have employed some hack to do this work for him and that Swift should not be regarded as its author.

Date of the Notice—Since the notice refers to Boyle as the Earl of Orrey, it is possible to fix its date with reasonable certainty. Charles Boyle became the Earl of Orrey in 1703 and the book itself was out in 1704. It can therefore be said that the notice was written sometime between 1703-1704.

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1. 2. **same author**—The *Battle of the Books* was published along with *A Tale of a Tub* and *Mechanical Operations of the Spirit*. The information assures the reading public that the *Battle* is written by the same author who has written *A Tale of a Tub*.

3. **the former**—that is, *A Tale of a Tub*.

7. **W. Wotton**—William Wotton (1665-1726) was an extensively read scholar of his day. He took his B. A. from St. Catherine's College, Cambridge at the very young age of 13. His prodigious learning was the envy of many a noted scholar of the time. William Wotton viewed modern learning with much sympathy and, when Temple came out with his *Essay on Ancient and Modern Learning*, in which he sided with the ancients, he was compelled to rebut his argument by asserting the supremacy of the modern learning. This he did in *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning*, published in 1694. Though Wotton was careful to make distinction between learning and literature, and in the latter case conceded the supremacy of the ancients, yet his stand appeared to be inimical to the position adopted by Temple and hence the savage treatment accorded him by Swift.

When the second edition of the *Reflections* was issued in 1697 it carried Bentley's *Dissertation* in the form of an appendix. It was *Dissertation* which openly challenged the judgment and scholarship of Temple. But Swift, in the *Battle*, treats both Wotton and Bentley with equal contempt.

1. 8. **Bentley**—Richard Bentley (1662—1742) was the greatest philologist and Greek scholar of his age. Though he is given a very rough treatment in the *Battle*, but time has

since redeemed his reputation and proved him right in the stand taken by him in questioning the genuineness of Aesop's *Fables* and the *Epistles* of Phalaris.

Born in Yorkshire and educated at St. John's College, Cambridge, Richard Bentley made name for himself as a scholar by issuing a critical note on the Greek dramatists. His reputation increased steadily and in 1694, he was appointed Keeper of St. James's Library. When William Temple put out his *Essay*, he, with his immense philological knowledge and scholarship, soon discovered that the *Epistles* referred to in Temple's *Essay*, were spurious. He became an object of Swift's wrath when he appended his *Dissertation* to Wotton's second edition of the *Reflections*.

8-9. **to destroy the credit of Aesop and Phalaris**—In his *Dissertation*, Bentley had challenged the antiquity and genuineness of Aesop's *Fables* and Phalaris's *Epistles* referred to by Temple in his *Essay*.

8. **Aesop**—Aesop is known for his fables, which are read throughout the world by people of all ages. They have been the delight of generations after generations, in all climes and countries. Among his more popular stories are those relating to the fox and the sour grapes, the foolish crow cheated by the fox, the man and his donkey.

Aesop is believed to have lived in the sixth century A. D. Many legends are associated with him. One legend has it that he was a slave of Iadmon, a Thracian. Later on he got his freedom and turned his attention to writing Fables. Perhaps it would be more true to say that Aesop compiled the fables written by diverse hands and which were current in his time.

1. 9. **Phalaris**—*Phalaris*, who probably lived in the 6th century B. C., is known to history as a tyrannical ruler. Of the many legends associated with him, the one says that he used to roast the criminals alive in a brazen bull, made specially for the purpose. His *Epistles* have been read by scholars with considerable curiosity and interest.

11. **falls hard upon**—Bentley proved the *Epistles* spurious and called in question the judgment of Temple in praising them lavishly.

11-12. **new edition of Phalaris**—Immediately after Temple had praised the literary merit of Aesop's *Fables* and Phalaris's *Epistles*, Charles Boyle, a wit of Chirst Church College, Oxford, took upon himself the task of popularising the *Epistles* by bringing out a new edition of Phalaris. For the purpose he had to consult the manuscript-text, kept in St. James's library and it is said that Bentley showed him courtesy while he was thus engaged in his editorial work. The new edition was out in 1695.

12. **Charles Boyle**—Charles Boyle (1676-1731) was a scholar of the Christ Church College, Oxford and sided with Temple in the controversy over the respective merits of the Ancients and the Moderns. He brought out a new edition of Phalaris in 1695 as Temple had praised the work in his Essay. He was made the Earl of Orrery in 1703.

13. **to which Mr. Boyle replied at large**—Boyle issued a rejoinder, *Dr. Bentley's Dissertations.....Examined by the Honourable Charles Boyle, in 1698.*

14. **the doctor voluminously joined in**—Not to be outdone, Dr. Bentley issued a lengthy reply, *Dissertation upon the Epistles of Phalaris with an Answer to the Objections of the Honourable Charles Boyle, in 1699.*

16. **Sir William Temple's character and merits**—Temple was generally regarded as a man of liberal views and scholarship. There is no doubt that in his own circle he was much respected. The challenge to his erudite learning from Wotton and Bentley must have come as a rude shock to his admirers.

20-21. **the books in.....the controversy**—In order to show the Ancients and Moderns fighting out the issue to settle the question of supremacy, Swift animates the books of St. Jame's Library. He pictures before us single combats, all of which invariably end in the Ancient triumphing over his adversary, and thus achieves the desired result which otherwise could not have been possible through tedious argumentation.

20. **St. James's Library**—The Ryal Library. It is known as St. James's Library as it is situated in St. James's Palace. Bentley was appointed its Keeper in 1694.

22-23. **by the injury of fortune or weather**—Swift had deliberately left many combats and incidents unfinished, probably because to be decisively conclusive would have been embarrassing. He therefore pretends that the manuscript has suffered damage at many places, by chance or by weather.

l. 23. **being in several places imperfect**—There are many gaps or hiatuses in the manuscript; hence it is not complete. See note to line 22-23.

6-27. **meant only of books, in the most literal sense**—This is quite ingenious of Swift. He wants to protect himself by saying that not persons but only books are involved in the battle. Such a view, however, seems indefensible as the evidence in the book itself goes against it. Take for instance, the combat between Virgil and Dryden. The personal details are so meticulously outlined that one is convinced that it is Dryden *the person* and not *the book* that is engaged in the fight.

The Preface of the Author

[Note : Swift makes use of the mask in his satirical writing ; that is to say, he does not appear personally but writes shielded behind a fictitious character which he creates for the purpose (See the Chapter : *Swift as a Satirist* and also *Chapter X*). Here an anonymous Author is supposed to have written this 'full and true account' of the battle.]

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1. 1. **Satire is a sort of glass**—Note carefully Swift's views on the nature and aim of satire. Satire he views as a sort of corrective. He makes distinction between particular satire, which attacks the idiosyncracies and failings of an individual and therefore hurts the person in question, and general satire, the aim of which is to attack those follies and weaknesses which are common to all mankind. The latter, therefore, does not hurt any person individually.

Satire is here likened to a glass or mirror, because as one can see one's face in a mirror, similarly one can behold in satire the weaknesses of himself and his fellow-beings.

3. **that kind of reception it meets in the world**—Satire is popular among reading public because in it the reader laughs at the follies and stupidities of others, without being personally involved.

4. **very few are offended with it**—One resents criticism of his own mistakes and shortcomings, but can safely enjoy the spectacle of the folly of some another person.

4-5. **But, if it.....the danger is not great**—A satirist need not worry if any individual takes offence at his satirical composition, for the simple reason that the person satirised must be a weak mortal, beset with failings, and can therefore pose no threat to the writer.

1. 8-9 **add strength to the sinews of the body**—In anger a man can physically exert himself beyond his usual strength.

9-10. **relax those of the mind**—But, mentally, a man becomes

weaker and more foolish in anger. Therefore, should any individual, feeling hurt, try to harm the satirist he would be merely making a fool of himself.

11-20. **Critical Note**—An often quoted passage of Swift in which the satirist demonstrates his ability to unleash a quick flurry of telling blows. There is an unrelenting energy in evidence in this passage. Swift delivers his blows with venom and does not stop until he has floored the opponent.

In this passage, he sounds a warning to such of his adversaries—the reference is undoubtedly to Wotton and Bentley—as would have the temerity to dispute and challenge his judgment or to attack him out of spite. Being intellectually weak, they must learn to manage their perniciously limited stock of knowledge with care and sparingly. If they start entering into controversy with others who are intellectually superior to them, they would end up by consuming all their stock and remain blank fools for the rest of their lives.

The mind is here compared to milk. Just as milk has only a limited amount of cream in it and once it is taken away, the milk is fit only for the dogs, in the same way once the limited stock of knowledge available to an intellectually weak person is used up, his mind will become utterly worthless.

Notice the sarcasm and biting satire of the passage.

11. **There is a brain.....scumming**—some minds are limited in their power of thinking and once their limited intellectual energy is used up they have nothing more to offer.

11. **Scumming**—skimming ; metaphorically, to use up the limited intellectual power.

12. **gather it with discretion**—Such mentally decrepit persons must be careful to use their intelligence only sparingly. If they enter into frequent and protracted controversy, they would soon become intellectually bankrupt.

If the reference here is to Wotton, as is quite reasonable to suppose, it is a most uncharitable remark. No doubt Wotton had referred to many sources and used a whole plethora of details to support the cause of modern

learning in his *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning*, but it would be far from truth to take him for an intellectual bankrupt.

13-14. **let him.....lash of his betters**—Swift sounds a warning to both Wotton and Bentley not to cross swords with him, since they are no match for him, intellectually speaking.

15. **bubble into impertinence**—Their mental stock being very limited, it would soon be consumed if they entered into controversy ; and thence forward instead of cream their mind, on being agitated, would produce mere froth. In other words, their minds would be capable of nothing but absurd arguments.

16. **wit without knowledge**—To be effective, a man must have wit as well as knowledge. A mind with no knowledge and only wit is like milk from which cream has been removed.

1. 13 **to be thrown to the hogs**—Churned milk from which cream has been removed is unfit for human consumption ; it can only be used for pigs. In the same way, a mind devoid of knowledge or which has consumed its limited mental stock can produce nothing worthwhile. Its mumblings are meant only for the fool.

Text

A FULL AND TRUE ACCOUNT OF THE BATTLE FOUGHT LAST FRIDAY, ETC.

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Summary of the Para 1—History bears witness that wars are caused by pride and avarice. To take a familiar example, dogs quarrel when one lucky dog comes into possession of something which others also covet.

1. **circumspection**—care.
2. **Annual Records of Time**—An original note contains the following observation : “Riches produceth Pride ; Pride is War’s Ground, & c. Vid. *Ephem.* de Mary Clarke, opt. edit.” What Swift means would be clear if we keep in mind that *Ephem.* here stands for Ephemerides, which was a name given to some of the compilations of almanacs. *Opt. Edit.* means the lastest issue. Almanacs were very popular in the days of Swift and were frequently consulted by general public to know the future. Swift had made fun of this practice in his *Bickerstaff Papers*, in which he put the famous astrologer, Patridge out of work. Swift is here humourously alluding to almanacs of the day—here called the Annual Records of Time—to prove that wars are the result of want and greed.

Almanacs are called the *Annual Records of Time* since they were issued annually.

It is possible that here Swift has Wing’s almanac in mind, though he intentionally refers to the name of a fictitious character Mary Clarke to mislead the reader. This impression is confirmed by the fact that the quotation given by Swift occurs in its extended form in Wing’s almanac, in which it runs as follows :

“Wars begets Poverty,
Poverty Peace :
Peace maketh Riches flow,
(Fate never doth cease :)

Riches produceth Pride,
 Pride is War's Ground,
 War begets Poverty.....",

1. 2-3. **war is the child.....daughter of riches**—It is generally believed, as can be seen from the quotation printed at the top of Wing's almanac, that riches cause pride and pride is the root cause of war. Swift however, disputes this view. In his opinion wars are caused not by riches but by want. A person or a nation living in affluence will never engage in quarrels; but want forces a man to possess another's property by waging a war.

In other words, the writer is hinting that the Ancient-Modern controversy was deliberately started by the Moderns, who have nothing to stand comparison with the immortal works of their adversaries.

5-6. **pride is nearly related to beggary and want**—Swift is here tracing the geneaology of Pride. The crux of the matter is that pride which co-exists with want, and want in its turn prompts avarice and lust. Therefore wars are caused by both pride and want, and not by riches.

1. **fall out—quarrel**. Prosperous persons are well satisfied and, so there is no reason for them to provoke quarrels.

9. **invasions usually travelling from north to south**—It is a fact of history that throughout the Middle Ages the rich countries of the south were attacked by barbarous tribes sweeping down from the north. This was so because the climate of the north did not favour agriculture as much as did the conditions prevailing in the south. The people living in southern hot countries produced things in plenty and were generally well off. Hence the frequent attacks of the scarcity-afflicted tribes of the north.

1. 12. **lust and avarice**—Lust means sensual desire, while avarice implies greed. Swift names these two evils as primary causes of war, whether between individuals or nations. From this point of view, he first, examines the behaviour of dogs and then the Ancient-Modern controversy.

15. **the republic of dogs**—An example of mock-heroic manner. With assumed seriousness, which only thinly veils the satiric intention of the writer, Swift refers to unruly group of dogs in terms of a republic.

16. The dogs are all the time snarling and barking except when their stomachs are full.

18. broils—quarrels.

21. **falls to an oligarchy**—Sometimes the lucky dog shares his possession with a few others, so that with their help he might ward off the danger from other discontent dogs. This is an example of the oligarchic system of government in which the few rule over the many.

23-24. **these dissensions.....their females**—The same pattern of behaviour is observed in the relation between dogs and their females.

27-28. **commonwealth of that street**—Notice the humorous effect of this mock-epic phraseology.

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1. What Swift means to say is that it is always the discontented ones, who desire and yet do not have that indulge in snarling and bickerings. He finds this true in both canine and human relationships.

6. **real or in opinion**—actual or imaginary.

Summary of Para 2.

In this long paragraph running to 80 lines, Swift explains the circumstances leading to a quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns. The Moderns coveted the superior position of the ancients, who lived on the highest peak of Parnassus, and asked them to either surrender the top or else they would dig down the rock to lower their position. This being unacceptable to the Ancients, the two parties found themselves engaged in a continued war in which much ink was wasted to support their respective positions.

1. 12-13. If the analogy of the dogs can be applied to literary disputes there also want and pride would be found to be behind all controversies.

12-13. **two great parties at this time in arms**—The reference is to the prevailing dispute regarding the respective merits of the Ancients and the Moderns. See Introduction to the *Battle*.

15-16. **so inflamed by the warm heads**—In the heat of the controversy the arguments of the opposite party are

neither listened so carefully nor examined dispassionately. The obstinacy of some headstrong persons is responsible for the continuance of the dispute.

Though Swift here refers to the 'warm heads' of both parties, yet the trend of the narrative suggests that the blame belongs to the Moderns alone. The Moderns are obstinate and do not listen to reason ; it is therefore futile to enter into discussion with them. See the 'spider and the bee' episode in which there is a dialogue between the two, but when the spider deliberately refuses to see sense, the bee flies away leaving the spider fretting and fuming.

17. **pretensions**—claims.
18. **overtures of accomodation**—The dispute continues on since neither party wants to understand and settle the dispute.
1. 19-20. A native attempt to create an impression of impartiality by bringing in a witness whose independent existence is never established.
21. **Parnassus** : a mountain in Central Greece—Traditionally believed to be the favourite haunt of Apollo and the Muses, the patron gods of poetry and arts. The two tops of parnassus correspond to the literary reputation of the inhabitant. On the highest top live the Ancients, who, by common consent, are masters in their own fields. The lower peak is meant for those whose literary achievement is not of such high degree ; here live the Moderns.
25. **But these, disliking their present station**—The war is set afoot on account of the unholy desire of the Moderns to occupy a superior position of which they are not the rightful masters.
- 28-29. **Especially towards the east**—The east is a traditional symbol of light. It seems, here it stands for glory. The position of the Ancients spoiling the view of the Moderns towards the east would mean that their greater achievements pale the Moderns into a position of less importance; and hence the Ancients are a sort of obstacle in their way to glory.
35. **shovels and mattocks**—Tools for digging.
- 36-2. Swift contrasts the courtesy and large-heartedness of the

Ancients with the self-centredness [and ungrateful nature of the Moderns.

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3. **Aborigines**—Original inhabitants.

Critical Note—The attitude of the Moderns in aspiring for a position which rightly does not belong to them, appears impudent. They ought to have been grateful that the Ancients have permitted them to live so near to the top peak, but instead they choose to harm their benefactors. The idea is that the Ancients were the pioneers and the Moderns have learnt many things from them ; but instead of showing their indebtedness for the lead given by the Ancients, the Moderns seek to disparage them and belittle their achievement.

9. **recompensed by the shade and shelter if afforded them**—

The position of the Moderns is being reviewed from the point of view of both the parties. The Moderns are conscious of the dominating position of the Ancients and grudge that their high seat comes in the way of their vision ; they forget, quite conveniently, the argument of the other side, that is the protection and shade given them by the higher peak.

11. **it was either folly or ignorance to propose it**—it will be an act of foolhardiness or sheer ignorance of reality if the Moderns try to translate their proposal of levelling the seat of the Ancients into practice.

12. **if they did, or did not know**—folly, if they knew and yet did it, ignorance of reality, if they did not know that the mountain is a single rock entire and could not be dug down.

13. **would break their tools and hearts**—The solidity of the mountain will frustrate all their efforts to dig it down. Allegorically, the Ancients have an unvulnerable reputation which it will be sheer folly to attack. Their position is secure in literary history and the efforts of the latter day generation to disparage them and to bring them down from their seats will end up in total failure.

15. **to raise their own side of the hill**—If the Moderns desire a position better than the Ancients, let them raise the standard of their own writings rather than to belittle the

great achievements of the latter. Swift subtly hints that the attitude of the Moderns is one of negation, while that of the Ancients is positive.

1. 17. **but also largely contribute**—A significant observation. The modern writers learn many things from the tradition and are greatly influenced by it in their mental make-up and achievement. Therefore, the Ancients, who started the tradition, may be said to contribute, albeit indirectly, to the achievements of modern literature.

It will not be out of place to recall here the importance of the tradition, as convincingly pointed out by T. S. Eliot in his essay, '*Tradition and Individual Talent*'. He says, "Tradition is a matter of much wider significance... It involves, in the first place, the historical sense, which we may call nearly indispensable to anyone who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year ; and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence ; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order."

At another place Eliot says, "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone ; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this is a principle of aesthetic, not merely historical, criticism."

20. **expedients**—alternatives.

21. **obstinate war**—so called because the Moderns did not see the truth of arguments put forward by the Ancients and persisted in their foolish efforts to disparage the latter.

1. 21. **on the one part**—that is, by the Ancients.

22. **allies**—The reference is to the staunch supporters of the Ancients. In the *Battle*, Temple and Boyle appear as the Allies.

24. **affording continual recruits**—The number of the Moderns was so large that when one line was annihilated another group of fighters immediately took its place.

Does not Swift mean to say that the Ancients were original and great writers, and hence their number is very limited ? But, on the other hands, in the latter day anyone can call himself a writer and so the number of the Moderns is formidable. And since their reputation as writers is not high, they easily vanquished by the valiant Ancient.

25. **rivulets of ink**—Mock-heroic touch. Ink is imagined as the most potent weapon in literary warfare and the writer humourously says that rivers of ink have been consumed by the two parties in writing their volatile arguments.

26. **augmented**—increased.

26-32. **Critical Note**—A parody of the epic tradition of describing the weapons used in war. Virgil, in *Aeneid*, gives an elaborate description of the weapons used by the warriors of both sides. Here is a description of Turnus' spear :

“Turnus now held poised for long a spear of hard oak pointed with steel, and hurled it at Pallas, crying : ‘Look ! See whether my weapon pierces better !’ So he spoke ; and the spear-head with its shuddering impact dashed through the centre of Pallas’ shield, with all its layers of iron and bronze and the many dense-packed coverings of bull’s hide, rent through the defences of his cuirass, and pierced his broad chest.”

Milton, too, describes the shield of Satan elaborately in *Paradise Lost*. Homer’s description of the enormous shield of Diomedes is again an example of epic description. Swift is parodying the epic tradition here. He describes the pen in terms of a big canon, with ink serving as destructive gunpowder.

1. 27. **missive weapon**—missile ; a weapon which can be hurled at enemy positions through a machine. In literary warfare, ink, in which all confutations, notes, arguments etc. are written and directed at the opposite party, serves as a missile, fired through the pen.

29. **quill**—pen, here compared to a canon.

32-36. **This malignant liquor.....the combatants**—Another example of the parody of epic tradition. Swift traces the history of ink—here imagined as a potent weapon of literary

warfare—in the same way in which Homer traces the geneology of the weapons of his heroes in *Iliad*.

32. **Malignant liquid**—liquid used for inflicting insults, which cause so much of bitterness and ill-will.

32. **compounded**—prepared.

34. **gall and copperas**—The two important ingredients of ink. Both are poisonous.

34. **by its bitterness and venom to suit**—The poisonous quality of the two ingredients matches the bitterness of arguments advanced in a controversy.

35. **foment**—stir up.

32-7. The analogy of the practice adopted by the Greeks applied to the controversy in question.

Note—It was a custom among the Greeks that, when a decisive result could not be reached on the battlefield, both the warring parties would proclaim themselves victorious and to support this claim the arms of the defeated enemy or some such souvenirs were publicly displayed. Perhaps the same practice is being used in the current Ancient-Modern controversy, with both parties claiming victory and ready to support the claim with many notes, explanations, briefs, etc., written by each in its defence and in vindication of its stand.

1. 2. **trophies**—arms of the defeated enemy which are kept as prize of the war.

3. **to keep itself in countenance**—to maintain its hypothetical claim to victory and thus to preserve its brave face.

5. **the learned**—Like the Greeks, the men of letters also set up trophies in support of their claim to victory.

7. **their trophies**—The trophies of the learned are the books and notes written to vindicate a particular view.

7. **whichever comes by the worst**—No matter which party fares better in the dispute, both the rival groups will pose as victorious and exhibit its books of argument to boost their position.

11-13. **disputes, arguments, etc.**—The various names under which controversial writings are published. Publication of such books was a highlight of the Post-Restoration period.

15. **representatives**—The title-covers of the controversial books are put on public display in order to attract notice of all those who happen to pass by that way.
16. **chiefest and largest**—Of the many books so published, the important ones are permanently preserved in libraries, which, after the mock-heroic manner, are called 'magazines.'
17. **magazines**—places meant for storage of arms and ammunition. Libraries, preserving and storing as they do books of controversial nature, are like magazines where arms and gun-powder are stored for the use of military.

Summary of the Para 3.

Controversial books are hunted by the spirits of their writers. Therefore, for fear of their falling out among themselves, they were bound to the peace with strong iron chains. The first reported quarrel took place when Scotus, in conspiracy with Aristotle, displaced Plato from his eminent position among the divines and himself occupied the vacant throne.

20. **instilled and preserved the spirit of each warrior**—The book being an expression of the intellectual aspirations and ideas of the writer, it can be said to preserve the spiritual quintessence of the author. Compare with the view expressed by Milton in his impassioned plea for intellectual liberty, *Aeropagitica*. In it he views books not as dead things, but as living intellectual offsprings of their writers, capable of influencing generation after generation for century after century. Says Milton :

"For books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are ; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them."

22. **transmigrates there to inform them**—After the death of the writer, his spirit hovers over the book. This is just a way to account for the influence which books continue to exercise even after the death of writer. Plato believed that 'terrene' souls 'go out of their bodies with affection to the things they left behind them.'
- 22-23. **it is with libraries as with other cemeteries**—As ceme-

teries contain dead bodies, which are hunted by their spirits, similarly libraries contain books over which the spirits of the dead writers hover.

25. **Brutum hominis**—the spiritual or elementary principle of man as opposed to the physical and the ethereal principle. The notion of *brutum hominis* originated with Plato, who, in *Phadeo*, suggests that the soul or *brutum homini* haunts the grave until the physical body is completely disintegrated. Thomas Vaughan, a 17th century poet also alludes to this belief. Also compare, Milton's *Comus*, ll. 470-73.

‘Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp
Oft seen in charnel vaults and sepulchres
Linger ing and sitting by a new-made grave ;
As loth to leave the body that it loved.’

28. In the same way the spirit of the writer hovers around the book until it (book) reaches the end of its life-span.

32. **disorderly**—ungovernable and quarrelsome.

35-36. **with strong iron chains**—The reference is to the then prevalent practice of binding certain books with iron chains. Swift gives a cunning twist to this custom and imagines that chains are used in order to keep controversial books from precipitating a quarrel.

36. **Of which invention**—that is, the first occasion when the need to keep books in confine was first felt.

37. **Scotus**—An Englsh philosopher, who lived and wrote in the 14th century and was a dominating influence in the world of thought until the 16th century when his cramping and abstruse philosophical system was challenged and shaken off under the impetus of the Modern thought. Legend has it that for some time he worked as Professor of Divinity at Oxford. His most significant work was *De Modis Significandi Sive Grammatica Speculatix*.

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3. **Aristotle**—(384-322 B. C.) A great Greek philosopher and thinker, who contributed to various disciplines and branches of knowledge. He was a disciple of Plato, but at many places he disagreed with his master, a fact to which Swift refers in his allusion to the ousting of Plato by Aristotle and Scotus.

Aristotle thought and wrote almost on all the subjects known to his age. Some four hundred works were attributed to him.

4. **Plato**—(427 B. C.-348 B. C.) One of the earliest known Greek philosophers and a disciple of Socrates. His views had considerable Influence during the pre-Renaissance period, and to some extent even afterwards. His opinions were meticulously studied and propagated by his disciples, the Platonists.
5. **Turn him out from his ancient station**—Scotus, in conspiracy with Aristotle, dispossessed Plato of his pre-eminent position among philosophers. In other words, the theories of Scotus and Aristotle conflicted with the opinions of Plato and after some time Plato's influence waned.

Henry Craik says : “The dispute between the Platonists and Aristotelians was one in which Swift had no interest, and of which, probably, he knew very little. He introduces this episode merely to illustrate the struggles between authors ; and, as a fact, many of those to whom he refers sarcastically were noted as impugners of medieval Aristotelianism.”

Summary of Paras 4 & 5.

The peaceful atmosphere of libraries has been lately vitiated by at new controversy. The writer laments that his proposal for the maintenance of amity among books was not heeded to. Now that the war fought between the rival books is the talk of the town, the writer, on the request of his friends, has agreed to write a true and impartial account of it.

11. **expedient**—Alternative.
- 13-14. **Instinct with a most malignant spirit**—These new controversial books contain matter designed to foment bitter controversy.
15. **Higher summyt of Parnassus**—To strip the expression of allegory, the controversy centred on the question as to which of the two parties was superior.
20. **create broils**—The author had the foresight to see that the admission of new controversial books might spark off fresh trouble.

21-22. **Champions of each side should be coupled together—** Swift's suggestion is based on the popular notion that equally strong and lethal poisons cancel out one another. He therefore advanced the proposal that the most important books of either side should be cleverly mixed up with each other, so that the malignant effect of the one, will annual that of another.

24. **Malignity—poisonous effect.**

22-24. Perhaps the idea is that acquaintance with just one viewpoint in controversial matters is likely to have a prejudicial effect on the thinking of the reader ; whereas if he comes to know the arguments of the opposite side he might arrive at a more balanced judgment, which will be free from the extremes of either side.

It is interesting to draw attention to a similar proposal made by Swift in *Gulliver's Travels*. One of the projectors of the Academy of Iagado is busy in finding out methods to eliminate political violence and he makes the following suggestion :

“When parties in a state are violent, he offered a wonderful contrivance to reconcile them. The method is this. You take an hundred leaders of each party ; you dispose them into couples of such whose heads are nearest of a size ; then let two nice operators saw off the *Occiput* of each couple at the same time, in such a manner that the brain may be equally divided. Let the *Occiputs* thus cut off be interchanged, applying each to the head of his opposite party-man. It seems indeed to be a work that requires some exactness ; but the professor assured us, that if it be dextrously performed, the cure would be infallible. For he argued thus : that the two half brains being left to debate the matter between themselves within the space of one skull, would soon come to a good understanding, and produce that moderation as well as regularity of thinking.....”

—*Gulliver's Travels, Part III, Ch. VI.*

1. 25. **I was neither an ill-prophet...counsellor—** Events have proved that the warning sounded by the author about a possible trouble was right, and had his advice been heeded to, the war lately fought could have been averted.

32. **all qualifications requisite in an historian—** Swift is using

the mask of a supposed Author. The author thinks that he is eminently suitable for the task of writing a history of the war, because, firstly, he has all qualifications to undertake such a work, and secondly, he is retained by neither party and can, therefore, be impartial in his approach.

1. 35. **a full impartial account**—Though the author claims to have put down an objective and complete account of the battle, but his claim is believed by the book itself. Firstly, the account is not impartial as the sympathies of the author are unmistakably with the ancients and he whenever possible, shows them as more civilised and more learned than their adversaries. Moreover the single combats are written in such a manner as to show them in a more favourable light. Secondly, the account is not full and complete, as there are many gaps in the manuscripts and many events are not described in their entirety.

Summary of Para 6.

The favourable attitude of the Keeper of the royal library towards the Moderns and his hostility to the Ancients did much to foment the trouble. Since he could not lay low to Ancients as he had vowed to do, he showed his rancour by putting Ancients in positions most inconvenient to them. This created a lot of bad blood between rival factions and thus showed the seeds of dissension.

36. **guardian of the regal library**—Bentley was appointed the keeper of St. James's library in 1694. He along with Wotton is the main target of this satire.

Critical Note—This whole passage is instinct with sarcasm and sardonic humour, the aim of Swift being to ridicule Bentley and to make him appear as a crooked opponent of the Ancients. He is motivated by malicious intentions and uses unfair means to get the better of his rivals. This trait of his character is brought out more fully in his attempt to kill Aesop and Phalaris while they are asleep.

1. 37. **chiefly renowned for his humanity**—The reference to Bentley's humanity is ironic. The meaning here is that Bentley was both a boor and inhuman person, though he was well read in humanities but in his behaviour, as shown by his curt behaviour to Charles Boyle in con-

nection with the loan of the MS of Phalaris, he was discourteous.

It may be remarked that Charles Boyle, while issuing his edition of Phalaris, had made a reference to Bentley's 'humanity.' Thereafter the word 'humanity' as used to describe Bentley's conduct came to mean inhumanity and boorishness.

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1. **engagement**—battle.
- 2-3. **knock down two of the Ancients chiefs**—The reference is to the controversy regarding the genuineness of *Aesop* and *Phalaris*, the two authors praised by William Temple in his *Essay*. Bentley was quick to point out that the *Fables* of *Aesop* and the *Epistles* of *Phalaris* were spurious, thus destroying their reputation as writers.
4. **the superior rock**—the highest peak of Parnassus, which has earlier been described as a single rock and on which the Ancients had been living for centuries,
- 4-6. **but, endeavouring to.....own unhappy weight**—Here the physical stands, allegorically, for the intellectual. The literal meaning is: Bentley failed to climb up the hill where the ancients lived because he was too heavy and found it difficult to drag his enormous weight after him. On a higher place, it means that Bentley's pedantic learning and dead weight of scholarship prevented him from understanding the greatness and beauty of classical writers.
7. **tendency towards his centre**—Bentley, like other Moderns, was self-centred and an egoist and saw no merit in the works of Ancient writers.
- 7-9. **for, being light-headed.....to mount**—The Moderns may be heavy and weighty in their physical bulk, but mentally they are empty and, therefore, extremely light. The result is that they indulge in tall talks which can never be put into practice. Bentley provides an example of this foolishness. He vowed to 'knock down the two ancient chiefs' without ever reflecting on his ability or otherwise to undertake such a difficult task. His ambition therefore exists in the world of vain speculation and can never materialise.

8. **speculation**—here, vain planning.

8. **agility**—nimbleness.

9. **conceive**—think.

9. **conceive nothing too high for them**—Being mentally light, the Moderns foolishly believe that they can perform all sorts of feats, such as climbing a high mountain despite their enormous bulk.

10. **reducing to practice**—When they try to implement their ambitious schemes.

11-12. **failed in his desion**—that is, to climb up the mountain and kill Aesop and Phalaris.

12. **rancour**—ill-will.

14—15. Bentley turns vindictive towards the Ancients and with a view to slight them shows all favours to the Moderns. The Moderns are assigned fairest rooms, while the Ancients are lodged in obscure places or given a very inconvenient place.

15. **apartments**—room.

20-21. **strange confusion of place among all the books**—An allusion to the disorderly state of things when Bentley took over the charge of the Library in 1694. The Library was such a mess that books and manuscripts could not be easily located and made readily available. Charles Boyle in the *Examination* complained of the unhappy state the Library was in and wrongly put the blame on Bentley. His complaint that manuscripts were not made available to eager scholars, was answered by Bentley, who exonerated himself of the blame and discounted any ill-will on his part. “I will own,” wrote he, “that I have often said and lamented, that the library was not fit to be seen. If the room be too mean, and too little for the books ; if it be much out of repair ; If the situation be inconvenient ; if the access to it be dis-honourable : is the library keeper to answer for’t ?”

Swift, in the words of Henry Craik, offers “an un-complimentary explanation” of the mess prevailing in the Library. He alleges that Bentley is responsible for it and imputes motives to him.

1. 22-24. **Great heap of learned dust.....keeper's eyes**—Again,

this sentence can be explained on two levels—physical and intellectual. Just as if some dust gets into a person's eyes he cannot see clearly ; similarly the shallow and cheap books of the Moderns had so vitiated Bentley's sense of judgment and critical perception, that he failed to see the merits of classical writers.

23. **heap of learned dust**—cheap scholarship offered by the Moderns.

24-25. **blew off..... into the keeper's eyes**—Excessive pre-occupation with the works of modern writers have damaged Bentley's faculty of critical perception ; hence his inability to appreciate the Ancients.

25. **humour**—strange habit.

25. **worms**—To say that Bentley used to eat worms out of the books of medieval writers would amount to saying that the scholarship and critical judgment of the Keeper was based on outmoded and cramping ideas found in the writings of the schoolmen.

26. **swallow them fresh and fasting**—Bentley accepted the outmoded opinions of the schoolmen without thinking ; hence his inability to understand the refreshing ideas that live in the works of the Ancients.

25. **Schoolmen**—In the medieval era there arose a school of theologians and philosophers whose methods were based on the principles of the Aristotelian logic. Even the Christian doctrines were subjected to this test. The works of these philosophers, collectively called the schoolmen, because their approach was purely academic, were characterised by abstruse thought and much hair-splitting. Not until new ideas appeared on the intellectual horizon at the dawn of the Renaissance was the hold of the schoolmen on the human mind shaken off and discarded. Bacon, the well-known Elizabethan man of letters, is on record to have condemned the philosophy and methods of the schoolmen. Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus were the leading lights of the schoolmen.

26-28. **whereof some fell upon his spleen.....of both**—In his characteristic satiric way, Swift is here offering an explanation for the ill-temper and twisted judgment of Bentley. Perhaps the worms eaten by him out of the schoolmen

agitated both spleen and mind too greatly for him to remain sane thereafter. A bad, agitated spleen results in bad temper and spiteful nature, whereas an agitated mind is incapable of thinking sanely and independently. Hence Bentley's exhibition of rancour towards the ancients and a vehement condemnation of their works.

perturbation—agitation.

1. 28. **walking much in the dark**—The place itself was not well-lit and this increased Bentley's propensity to commit mistakes. Metaphorically it may mean that the readings from the schoolmen left Bentley in complete intellectual darkness.

30-31. **lost the situation of it out of his head**—Swift's satire is not always universal. At times it degenerates into pure invective, as in the passage under discussion. He proves Bentley a wretched scholar brought up on cheap books and outmoded writings, a curt and inhuman person, vindictive by nature, and a misfit for the post of the Keeper. Can even invective go still further?

31. **replacing his books**—While replacing the books on the shelves, Bentley invariably sandwiched a solitary Ancient among the Moderns.

31. **clap—thrust.**

32. **Des Cartes**—Rene Des Cartes (1596-1650), a French mathematician and philosopher, marked a turning point in the realm of thought. His powerful influence was felt not only by philosophers but by men of letters also. The word 'Cartesian' is often used to refer to his philosophical tenets. There is little doubt that his mechanistic interpretation of the universe and emphasis on reason helped the evolution of a new trend in philosophy.

33. **Hobbes**—(1588-1679). An English thinker of the post-Restoration period. His political theories were a subject of protracted discussion. His most significant work was *Leviathan*.

33. **Seven Wise Masters**—“This was a popular class-book of the day, much in use as a book for the moral instruction of children. It is curious that Swift should name it as a representative of the Moderns, since the original compilation is traced back to Sandabar, Chief of the

Indian Brahmins, who is said to have lived before the Christian era.....It is a string of stories hanging upon a contrivance like that of the *Arabian Nights* and contain some tales that have obtained enormous vogue."

—Henry Craik.

1. 34. **Virgil**—(70-19 B. C). the Roman epic poet of the first century B. C. His famous epic, the *Aeneid* recounts the heroic exploits of Aeneas, the leader of the Trojan band. Standing as he did between the pagan and the Christian era, Virgil's contribution to the epic was significant. He helped keep alive the tradition of the epic, though in many ways he differed from Homer. His other important works were the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics*.

34. **Dryden**—Born in 1631 and died in 1700. Dryden dominated the post-Restoration literary scene in England. Though he will be remembered primarily for his versatires, yet his contribution in other fields—drama, prose and criticism—was by no means insignificant. He was Swift's uncle, through a long line of relationships. Legend has it that when Swift sent him his first attempts in composing verses, Dryden sent back a curt reply, saying, "Cousin Swift, you will never be a poet." Later in the book, when describing the encounter between Dryden, as representative of the Moderns, and Virgil that Swift has his sweet revenge by portraying his uncle as an imposter and a coward. In *A Tale of Tub* too Swift makes fun of the literary devices used by Dryden to gain cheap popularity.

35. **Withers**—(1588-1667), a lyric poet, who composed lyrics ranging from refreshingly beautiful to awfully trite. In the days of Swift he was looked upon as a dull poet and Swift's placing him alongside of Dryden is not without satiric undertones.

Summary of Para 7.

The Moderns seek to organise themselves to offer a strong front to the Ancients. With this aim in view they send a messenger to contact the scattered forces of the Moderns.

Critical Note—The preparations for the battle royal get under way with the attempt of the Moderns to collect

their scattered troops together. The assumed seriousness demanded by the mock-heroic treatment is scrupulously maintained, and the reader is being prepared for the climax that will be reached in the description of single combats.

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1. 2. **concert their affairs**—to bring the warriors together in order to present a strong front to the Ancients.
5. **light-horse, heavy-armed foot and mercenaries**—The warriors on the side of the Moderns are a poor match for the valiant Ancients. The former are without horse, the principal fighting unit in the war. Metaphorically it means that while the Ancients had great epic poets like Homer and Virgil—the epic holding the same position in the poetic world which the horse unit holds in war—the Moderns had *no great epic poet* to boast of. And if the warriors on the side of the Ancients have a sense of devotion to their cause, the Moderns are mostly lethargic and evinced no interest in the battle.
- 6-7. **the foot were in general but sorrily armed and worse clad**—Metaphorically, the majority of Moderns wrote shoddy stuff, without technique or beauty of form.
8. **out of case and heart**—in dejected, hopeless condition.
- 8-10. **Some few.....tolerably enough**—Though the Moderns were all the time contemptuous of the Ancients, yet the fact was that whatever they knew was learnt by studying the works of the classical writers.

Summary of Para 8.

The quarrel between the two parties grew fierce with the refusal of the Moderns to listen to the arguments of the opposite side. They disclaimed any obligation towards the Ancients and said that relied solely on themselves for whatever they did or possessed.

Para 8]

1. 11. **ferment**—disturbed condition.
11. **discord**—quarrel.
- 13-17. Notice that the Ancients are always ready to prove their superiority by putting forward sound arguments, but the

Moderns, knowing their weakness very well, do not take a fair attitude towards discussion and seek to prove their claim by harping on their wrong premises and by assuming violent postures.

15. **manifest reason**—arguments, the truth of which was all too apparent.

Critical Note—Notice the three apparently well-founded arguments advanced by the Ancient to support his viewpoint.

- (i) Since the Ancients were the first in point of time to take possession of Paranassus, therefore they have a fair right to it. Metaphorically it means that the Ancients were the earliest known writers when there were no existing literary traditions and they had to do pioneering work in their field. The Moderns, on the other hand, have appeared on the scene very recently and their reputations have not been put to the acid test of time.
- (ii) As opposed to the individual whimsicalities of the Moderns, the works of the Ancients embody time-honoured wisdom and are embodiment of good sense.
- (iii) The Moderns have borrowed much from the classical literature and learning ; hence the Ancients hold a position superior to the Moderns.

premises—arguments.

19. **the Moderns were much the more Ancient of the two**—The classical writers were born in a period of history when the human civilization was quite new ; whereas the 'Moderns' have lived at a later date in point of time. Therefore, according to the Moderns, they are more ancient than the classical writers.

24. **renounced**—disclaimed.

25-26. **to borrow their subsistence from you**—some of the Moderns have unwisely borrowed their themes and techniques from the Ancient writers, by beyond this, the Moderns owe nothing to them.

30-32. **For our horses.....sewing.**

Critical Note—Notice the headstrong nature of the Moderns. They claim self-sufficiency and are loath to

accept their relationship with the Ancients. Their **claim** to self-sufficiency is brutally satirised by Swift later in the book while discussing the 'spider and the bee' controversy. The writers who came after the classical age were consciously or unconsciously influenced by the themes and techniques of the Ancients, at times modifying them or improving upon them ; it would therefore be wrong to say that they owed nothing to others and were self-sufficient.

Compare this **claim** of the Moderns with that of the spider. "I am a domestic animal, furnished with a native stock within myself. This large castle (to shew my improvements in the mathematics) is all built with my own hands, and the materials extracted altogether out of mine own person."

1. 33. **ragged** **plight**—The reference is to the wretched clothes worn by the Moderns. Clothes here stand for the beauty of form. The Ancients had an unerring sense of beauty and gave fitting expression to their inner thoughts ; therefore they are called well-clad. On the contrary, the Moderns did not have such command over the form and their works lacked in balance, proportion and harmony. That is why they are called poorly dressed creatures. Compare this line of the last para : "whereof the foot were in general but sorrily armed, and worse clad."
- 34-35. **Jades** **lean** and **foundered**—their horses were physically in a poor condition.
35. **their weapons of rotten wood**—Metaphorically, their techniques were poor as compared to the perfect art of the Ancients. Yet inspite of all this, the Moderns claim self-sufficiency and superiority.
36. **he laughed**—Plato is a thinker and philosopher, whose quick eye can penetrate the show of things and find out the reality. He notices the sorry and wretched condition of the Moderns and cannot help laughing at the preposterous claims they are making.

Summary of Para 9.

Temple, who was a Modern by accident of birth but an Ancient in sympathies and taste, came to know of the unholy intentions of the Moderns and immediately alerted the Ancients.

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- 1-2. **late negotiations**—namely, their effort to collect an army of the Moderns and wage war on the Ancients.
5. **Temple**—See Introduction to the *Battle*. In fact, the book was written by Swift to defend his patron against what he considered to be a brutal attack by Wotton and Bentley.
6. **gave immediate intelligence to the Ancients**—All this is an allegorical version of the Ancient-Moderns' controversy which was set afoot in England by Temple. (See the Introduction).
9. **several of the Moderns fled over to their party**—Among those who staunchly defended the greatness of the Ancients were Temple and Boyle.
- 9-10. See Introduction to the *Battle*. Sir William Temple was well-known for his liberal education and extensive reading in classical literature.

Summary of Para 10.

Just then an important incident took place. A bee blundered into the web of a spider who lived in a corner of the library. As a result of this, the web suffered damage at many places. The spider, after overcoming his initial fear, came out from the centre, saw the culprit, and swore loudly at him. The spider claimed a superior position for himself and thought it impudent of the bee to challenge him to prove his higher rank.

Critical Note—The allegory of the spider and the bee is introduced here to make explicitly clear the difference between the nature of the Ancient and the Modern learning. Swift has handled the episode brilliantly and with utmost artistic economy. The spider resembles the Moderns in his self-centredness, egoism and preposterous nature. He produces nothing except poison and dirt. The web allegorically stands for modern books ; their material is as flimsy and as poisonous in nature as that of the spider's web. The bee, on the other hand, is the representative of the Ancients. He, like the classical writers, exercises judgment and labours hard in search of beautiful things and, consequently, brings to mankind sweetness and light.

l. 14. **material accident**—an event of some consequence.

16-17. **swollen up to.....number of flies**—A satirical hit. The bigger the size of the spider the larger the number of poisonous flies he has eaten.

16. **whose spoils**—The remnants of the dead bodies of the flies were lying there as a testimony of the poisonous nature of the spider.

18-19. **like human bones before the cave of some giant**—An artifice meant to heighten the mock-epic tone of the satire. One of the epic traditions is the use of apt similes, sometimes long-tail similes, to gain the effect of massiveness of dignity. As for example, the use of awe-inspiring similes in Milton's *Paradise Lost* : The shield of Satan, his body floating over the liquid fire, the cluster of fallen angels, etc., are all illustrated with imposing similes. Observe carefully the effect of this simile in which Milton describes the condition of the fallen angels :

“His legions, Angel forms who lay entranced,
Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the books
In vallombrosa, where the Etrurian shades
High over-arched embower ; or scattered sedge
Afloat, when with fierce winds Orion armed
Hath vexed the Red-Sea coast.....”

19. **The avenues of his castle**—Throughout the episode, the spider's cobweb is described in terms of a mansion or fort. This is in keeping with the mock-epic tradition of using sanctified expression for the description of trifles, to heighten the effect of absurdity and triviality. The web is described variously as a fort, a citadel, a mansion, a palace, a castle.

l. 19. **avenues to his castle**—the approaches to the centre of the web.

20. **turnpikes**—a spiked gate meant to serve as a barrier.

20. **palisadoes**—a fence of pointed pieces of metal. Note the burlesque in these references.

21. **after the way of the modern fortification**—The spider had made excellent arrangements to safeguard his web. In this art he was the equal of the Moderns. Swift is here alluding to the arguments advanced by some that one of

the things in which the Moderns excelled the Ancients was improved construction of forts.

22. **courts—courtyards** ; here outer fringes of the web.

22-23. **might behold the constable himself**—At the centre of the web lived the spider. There may be satire in referring to various devices used for the defence of the 'fort' and then bringing an anti-climax by saying that the master himself acted as constable.

24. **ports to sally out**—There were opening in the web which the spider used to go out, either for the purpose of catching his prey or to defend himself.

26-28. An anti-climax meant to show up the triviality of the spider's life. The danger to the well-fortified castle of the spider arises from swallows from above or brooms from below.

31. **expatiating**—wandering aimlessly.

33. **yielding to the unequal weight**—There is malicious humour in this line. The citadel, so laboriously prepared and defended, sinks down under the weight of a bee.

35. **Thrice the centre shook**—Notice the mock-epic phraseology. The web is here described in terms of the universe and the impact made by the bee's alighting on its outer fringes, is magnified to appear as final catastrophe overwhelming the entire creation.

The web was shaken badly and violently when the bee alighted on it. The spider was frightened and thought that the doom's-day had come and the whole creation was disintegrating.

1. 36. **convulsion**—violent motion.

37. **nature was approaching to her final dissolution**—The spider is not only extremely self-centred but a coward also. The minor incident of a bee alighting on the web so frightened him that he thought the doom's-day had come.

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1. **Beelzebub**—the god of flies.

1-2. **was come to revenge the death**—The spider had eaten up many flies and, so, he thought that Beelzebub, the god of flies, had come to revenge the death of so many of his subjects.

4. **resolved to issue forth**—After the violent commotion had subsided and the spider had overcome his initial fear, he decided to leave the centre, come out and see what had happened.
5. **acquitted himself of his toils**—the bee had by that time managed to struggle out of the web.
6. **posted securely**—sitting safely at a distance.
8. **remnants of the cobweb**—Notice the bee's dislike of the spider's web. Later in the controversy the bee refers to the web as a kennel.
- 9-10. **chasms, the ruins, and dilapidations**—The web broke down at many places. The imagery of the fort is maintained in describing the damage so caused. The little rents in the web are spoken of as chasms and ruins.
- 10-11. **very near at his wit's end**—made with anger and did not know what to do to make good the damage.
11. 13. **gathering causes from events**—Since the web was badly damaged and the remnants of it were still clinging to the bee's wings, the spider did not take long and concluding as to who the culprit was.
16. **litter**—confusion ; disorder.
22. **kennel**—the spider prides himself on what he considers to be his magnificent castle, but to the bee it looks like a kennel.
23. **confounded pickle**—miserable plight.
25. **never to stir abroad**—the spider will be extremely vulnerable once it comes out of its web.
26. **teach you better manners**—the spider is stung to the quick by the casual and contemptuous way in which the bee has answered back and so his threat to punish the bee and thus teach him to behave towards superiors (the spider, it must be kept in mind, thinks himself superior to the bee).
- 27-28. **spend your substance**—The bee's reply has a sting in it. He advises the spider to calm down, for the venom which he is spending in waging the quarrel, will be needed in repairing the broken web.
32. **By my troth**—by my word.

34-35. The bee asks the spider to give reasons as to why the world thinks him superior.

36. **swelled himself into the size and posture of a disputant**—Notice the spider's love of controversy and keenness to enter into wrangling. Swift means to suggest that the Moderns excel only in the art of waging futile controversies and relish disputes.

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1-2. **to be heartily scurrilous and angry**—Another satiric hit. The spider enters into discussion with a view not to get at truth but to exhibit his anger and vile nature.

II. 2-3. **least regard to the answers**—The spider is predetermined and has no desire to examine the arguments of the opposite party. This is a reflection on the obstinacy of the Moderns who would not listen to the viewpoint of the other party and wilfully convinced themselves for their supposed superiority.

4. **all conviction**—any argument that the bee (or the Ancients) might advance was futile since the spider (or the Moderns) had no intention to listen to it or to examine its correctness.

Summary of Para 11.

The spider gives the following argument to support his claim to superiority : the bee depends on flowers to support himself and is, therefore, a plunderer ; whereas the spider is self-sufficient and spins his material out of himself.

Critical Note—The main argument of the spider is his self-sufficiency and ability to spin his materials out of himself. Significantly this very point is used by the bee to cast aspersion on the nature of the spider. The spider no doubt spins out of himself. but judging from the poisonous nature of the material he produces, it is not difficult to say which is better—the spider, who produces venom and flybane, or the bee, who brings home wax and honey.

5. **Not to disparage myself**—The spider considers it below his dignity to so much as even entertaining the idea of comparing himself with the plundering and impudent bee.

6. **rascal**—as, in the opinion of the spider, the bee does nothing but to rob flowers and gardens of honey.
- l. 6. **vagabond**—a wanderer. The spider stays at home, while the bee roams about here and there in search of flowers.
7. **without stock or inheritance**—The allegation is that the bee neither comes of a good respectable family worth the name nor does he possess any family inheritance or property.
9. **Your livelihood.....upon nature**—It is noteworthy how the argument adduced by the spider against the bee is later on manipulated the other way round to establish his sweet and noble nature. The spider calls the bee a robber or a plunderer who does not spare any flower or garden and is roaming everywhere to collect honey. But, as Aesop puts it later, collecting honey is no plunder ; it calls for much search, wisdom and a sense of discrimination.
10. **freebooter**—robber.
11. **nettle**—a plant covered with stinging hair. It grows usually in wasteland.
12. **violet**—a beautiful flower.

The idea is that the bee spares neither prickly plants nor flowers. Another meaning can be that the bee does not have the sense to make distinction between prickly plants and flowers.

12. **domestic animal**—As compared to the roaming bee, the spider has a house to live in.
- 12-13. **native stock within myself**—a natural stock within my body from which I can draw whenever necessary. The reference is to the spider's habit of spinning out of himself.

The fact that the spider has a 'native stock within myself' and spins out of himself may also imply an egoistical nature. The Moderns were definitely more subjective than the Ancients.

- l. 13-14. **to show my improvements in the mathematics**—the nicely built web is a proof of the spider's mastery of mathematics.

15. The material of which the web is made is drawn from within the spider's body and not from external sources, as is the case of the bee.

Summary of Para 12.

God Himself has provided the bee with wings and voice and heavenly gifts are always directed to noble ends. The bee collects honey without injuring the flowers, thus enriching himself and at the same time bringing 'sweetness and light' to the humanity. The spider no doubt spins his materials out of himself, but they are of a poisonous nature.

18. **come honestly by my wings and my voice**—at least the spider has accepted one fact—that is, at least the wings and the voice are of the bee himself and not obtained from an external source.

19. The bee thanks God for the beautiful gifts, by virtue of which he roams about in search of honey. In other words, Providence itself has assigned this task to the bee and, so, it is noble, not ignoble as the spider thinks.

21-22. **I visit indeed all the flowers.....their taste**—The bee is a sort of archetype symbol of those who are always in search of beauty and the fulfilment of whose quest does in no way injure or harm any object. This is a significant sentence in the context of the controversy and Swift's views regarding the greatness of the Ancient's achievement. The classical writers had a feeling for beauty of nature and their writings are enriched with description of the loveliness of sights and sounds, of natural objects and their exquisite form. The bee has also to use his judgment and wisdom in selecting the right flower to collect honey and does in no way injure it in the process.

Sir William Temple in his *Essay* had also drawn attention to the symbolic significance of the bee. He writes: "(Bees) must range through fields, as well as gardens, choose such flowers as they please; and by properties and scents they only know and distinguish; they must work up their cells with admirable art, extract their honey with infinite labour and severe it from the wax, with such distinction and choice, as belongs to none but themselves to perform or to judge."

I. 26. **your skill in architecture**—the reference is to the spider's claim of possessing a good knowledge of mathematics and architecture, as evidenced by his web.

28. **labour and method enough**—As the spider has claimed himself, much labour and skill in construction are required to make the web.

29-30. **the materials are naught**—for all the labour and skill of the spider, the web will not endure long, because the material as is made of is really flimsy.

31-32. **consider duration and matter.....method and art.**

Critical Note—Here Swift is stating some of the basic principles of art. 'Method and art,' that is pedantic rules and technical skill, alone can never produce great art. Therefore those who possess mere ingenuity in craftsmanship, and claim originality on that score, may be popular for a time but their names will not endure long. Their works are like a spider's web, produced by much labour and skill, but having no substance. What makes for literary excellence is termed by the bee as '*duration and matter*,' that is a breadth of treatment which raises the work to universal level.

II. 33-34. **of drawing and spinning out all from yourself**—The spider, unlike the bee, depends solely upon himself for his materials.

36-37. **Critical Note**—Here the bee is turning the argument advanced by the spider topsy-turvy. The spider is proud of his being a domestic animal, of depending solely upon himself to draw and spin out his materials but the bee hits him where he is most vulnerable. To judge from the nature and quality of the material produced by the spider, his inside must be full of poison and filth.

34. **judge of the liquor in the vessel**—a small quantity is enough to tell the quality of the liquor inside a pot. Similarly, the poisonous flybane of the spider indicates the vast store of dirt and filth that he harbours within himself.

37. **lessen or disparage your genuine stock**—a satiric hit. The bee at once grants that the poison produced by the spider is not a borrowed one but his genuine possession.

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2. **to little foreign assistance**—The spider's possession and love of dirt and filth is augmented by the dirty matter which is all the time collecting on the web.
4. **sweepings from below**—whenever the floor below is swept and cleaned, the dirt rises and settles down on the web hanging above from the roof. In this way the dirty store of the spider increases with each sweeping.
- 10.13. **Critical Note** — In these lines is stated explicitly the views of Swift in regard to the nature of the Moderns and the Ancients. The question is not that of spurious originality, but of the intrinsic worth, whether the work be ancient in date or modern. A work of literature that does nothing but augment unhealthy contemplation or is written in a scurrilous vein to express individual whims and aberrations is hardly worth the name ; whereas one that is characterised by a breadth of treatment and gives sweetness and light will prove to be an enduring achievement.
11. 7-8. **lazy contemplation of four inches round**—The activity of the spider is restricted to the narrow circle of the web which will span hardly a few feet. Metaphorically, it is a satiric dig at the narrowness of vision that characterises the literature of the Moderns.
9. **feeding and engendering on itself**—The pride of the spider on his self-sufficiency springs from the fact that he utilises excrement to keep himself going.
- 9-10. **turns all.....into venom**—the nature of the spider is such that whatever he consumes is turned into poison.
10. **flybane**—a poison for flies.
11. **universal range**—As against the narrow compass of the spider, the bee flies over a wide area, visits many gardens and uses his sense discrimination to select the right flower for collection of honey.
- 11-12. **long search**—the bee has to visit many places in search of flowers.
12. **much study**—the bee must have knowledge of flowers for his search to be fruitful and rewarding.
12. **true judgment**—the bee must also have a sense of discrimination, *i. e.* ability to know which flower will yield

honey and which will not. Unless he has this gift of judgment his labour might well be wasted on a wrong type of flower.

1. 13. **bring home honey and wax**—The bee is a useful animal and brings to humanity the honey and wax. The first gives sweetness, and the second, light. It is noteworthy that, when Arnold was waging a war against the philistinism of his age, he used the words “sweetness and light” to symbolise his championship of literature and culture.

11-13. These lines are a good interpretation of the nature and merit of the ancient literature. The classical literature is the product of much endeavour, study, observation and true judgment.

Summary of Para 13.

That books of the library were listening to the argument of the two disputants with excited interest when the bee suddenly flew away, leaving the spider, fretting and fuming.

14. **managed with such eagerness**—the disputants had shown animated interest in putting forward their respective arguments.

14. **clamour**—noise, which shows the heat generated by the controversy.

15. **warmth**—the arguments were put forward with passion.

17. **issue**—the books were anxious to know the final outcome of the controversy.

17-19. **for the bee.....without looking for a reply**—Realising the futility of arguing with his pre-determined and headstrong opponent, the bee flew away unceremoniously.

18-21. The spider was once again collecting all his venom and energy to hit out at the bee, when the latter flew away, depriving the opponent of the opportunity to let off his stream.

Summary of Para 14.

Aesop, who had been listening to the arguments exchanged between the bee and the spider, came forward and interpreted the controversy in this way : the spider was a Modern in his egoistical nature and love of filth, whereas the bee, with his search of beauty, labour, and sense

of discrimination, symbolised the Ancients.

1. 22. **Aesop**—See Note above.

Critical Note—As explained above, Aesop is known for his fables which are allegorical in character and seek to convey morals. Aesop is, therefore, the right person who can offer an allegorical explanation of the dialogue just exchanged between the spider and the bee.

23-24. **barbarously treated**.....the regent's humanity—

A reference to Bentley's note showing the *Fables* of Aesop, so much praised by Temple in his *Essay* and held up by him as an example of antiquity and classical learning, as spurious.

24. **Regent**—Keeper of the Library *i. e.*, Bentley.

24. **humanity**—an ironical expression, implying lack of humanity on the part of Bentley.

25. **tore off his title-page**—A title-page mentions the name of the author. Now, since Bentley had raised doubts about the authorship of the Fables, he can be said to have torn off the title-page of Aesop.

28. **turned himself to a thousand forms**—In epics the gods and goddesses are endowed with power to change their shape according to their desire. The Greek mythology also contains stories of heavenly-beings changing their shapes. Thus Zeus is said to have ravished Leda in the disguise of a Swan. In the *Battle of the Books*, Swift endows Aesop, a mortal, with the same power.

1. 29. **borrowed shape of an ass**—a pungent and highly damaging satirical hit. When Aesop assumes the shape of higher animals, he is immediately detected by the Moderns, who do not allow him to escape out, but later they are duped by the Ancient. He assumes the shape of an ass to appear a Modern and thus escapes the enemy.

32. Aesop was delighted to listen to the acrimonious controversy, probably because he found a moral implicit in it.

33-34. Aesop admires the enthusiasm and comprehensiveness with which the two disputants put forward their points of view.

35-37. Aesop notices parallelism between the spider and the bee on the one hand and the Moderns and the Ancients

on another. He thinks that the comparison made by the bee holds good for the rival literary factions also.

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8-10. **For, pray.....his paradoxes**—Aesop now states explicitly the allegorical significance of the 'spider and the bee' episode. The spider is typical of the Moderns in his preposterous claims and self-contradictory assertions.

10. **you his brethren**—i. e., the Moderns.

12-14. **spins and spits.....assistance from without**—An allusion to the claims persistently put forward by the Moderns, especially in reference to scientific learning, that they have moved far away from the Ancients and have depended upon themselves to perfect their tools of enquiry. Even in the field of literature, new modes of expressions were being evolved in response to the needs of a changed sensibility. There was certainly no authority in the classics for the inter-mixing of tragi-comedy, as seen in the plays of Shakespeare, and which practice Sidney condemned in his *Apology of Poetry*. The *Essay* was another new form not derived from the Ancients. Also, the extravagances of a run-away imagination of the metaphysical poets and the later Elizabethan playwrights like Martson Beaumont, Chapman etc., must have appeared nothing but aberrations to these trained and brought up on the well-proportioned and restrained plays of the ancients. Therefore it is to some extent true that the 'Moderns' did not derive all their techniques and matter from old writers. However, Swift equates the Moderns with the spider and laughs at their claim of self-sufficiency and freedom from dependence on others.

11. 15-16. **the bee.....retained by us the Ancients**—The bee stands for the old writers.

20-26. **Erect your schemes.....hid in a corner**—The main charge which Swift brings against the Moderns is their inability to impart universality to their creations by embodying in them the themes of enduring nature and to make up, for this defect by a show of spurious technical skill. In this respect they resemble the spider, who spins laboriously to prepare his web, but the material of which as is made being flimsy, his labour will not endure. The Moderns can console themselves with the idea that what

they do is all their own and that they have no need to borrow from the Ancients, but it is a poor consolation indeed ! Mere technical skill and labour cannot produce great and enduring literature; it is ultimately a breadth of treatment that imparts universality to a creative work.

20-21. **Erect your schemes.....method and skill**—notwithstanding the technical ingenuity and a slavish pursuit of pedantic rules in the matter of literary writings.

II. 21-22. **materials be nothing but dirt**—but if the theme is not given a universal significance by a breadth of treatment, the literary work will prove as worthless as dirt. Here the literary works of the Moderns are compared to the web of the spider. Both are marked by spurious technical invention, but are totally devoid of any substance ; hence they will not survive time and even in their short span of life live in obscurity.

23. **edifice**—literally, spider's web ; metaphorically, literary creation.

28. **unless it be a a large vein of wrangling and satire**—The Moderns have no originality except in their relish of controversial writings and of satire.

28-29. **much of a nature and substance with the spider's poison**—The Moderns were known for their satirical writings, which invariably caused much bitterness. Moreover, satire *destroys* ; it does not *create*. Therefore, the works of the Moderns are here said to be poisonous and ephemeral, like the spider's web.

31-32. **by feeding upon the insects and vermin of the age**—Modern writers flourish on petty squabbles and mean controversies, these being the main themes of their art.

34. **beyond our wings and our voice**—The Ancients claim nothing as their own but power of imagination and music of verse.

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2-3. The Ancients observe nature intently, store their experiences and then treat them imaginatively in their works. Therefore, their works embody truths of nature (light) and give imaginative pleasure (sweetness).

Summary of Para 15.

The interpretation of Aesop so enraged the Moderns

that they resolved to wage a war on their enemies and for this purpose councils and committees were formed. The choice of a leader was the first difficulty they faced. Their army consisted of the horse, light horse, bowmen, dragoons, foot and mercenaries.

1. 4. **conceive**—to conjecture ; to form an idea of.
4. **tumult**—noise, clamour.
5. **descant**—speech.
7. **it should come to a battle**—The rival parties decided to fight to settle the question of supremacy.
10. **cabals and consults**—secret meeting and consultations. It is reminiscent of the cabals described in the ancient epics. Milton's fallen angels also hold a council to formulate plans to fight the enemy.
11. The Moderns are shown as an undisciplined force. Each one of them thirsts for individual glory.
- 12-13. The Moderns might have quarrelled over the question of leadership were it not for their fear of the enemy gaining advantage by their bickerings and sweeping down upon them immediately.
15. **the horse**—stands for the epic poets. Since the epic is the highest achievement in poetry, the honour of leading the army falls upon an epic poet. Though among the Moderns, only Milton and Tasso could be rightly considered to be epic poets, yet Swift also includes Dryden and Withers in the same category.
16. **Tasso**—(1544-95) An Italian poet and author of the well-known epic *Jerusalem Delivered*. Among his other noteworthy works are *Renaldo*, *Aminta* and *Torrismondo*.
1. 16. **Milton**—(1608-1674.) Famous English poet who lived in a turbulent period in the political history of England. His classicism was enriched with an astonishingly vast reading in the classics. During the Civil War he sided with the Independents and wrote a number of tracts in their defence. He went blind in 1652, and afterwards, in the intense seclusion of an isolated life, produced that rare gem of poetic beauty and melody, *Paradise Lost*. The great epic was started in 1658 and finished in 1665.

Though Milton did not receive much recognition as a poetic genius in his life-time, but afterwards he rode the surging wave of critical acclaim and was generally regarded as the most sublime poet in English language.

17. **Dryden and Withers**—Biographical note already given above.
17. **light-horse**—implies poets, other than the epic. Of the many poets of the periods, Swift alludes to two representative names—Cowley (England) and Despreuax (France.)
18. **Cowley**—(1618-1667). English poet and essayist. He was quite popular in his own time, but later fell into disrepute. His work is characterised by fantastic conceits, a quality to which Swift always reacted violently. He produced a number of irregular odes based on the Pindaric pattern. His important works are *Davideis*, *Mistress Poems*, and *Poetical Blossoms*.
18. **Despreaux**—(Nicolas Boileau.) Boileau's name has now become a byword for French neo-classical criticism. Born in 1636 and died in 1711, Boileau was for decades the centre of French literary activity and criticism. As a neo-classicist, he urged always prudence, moderation, common sense and obedience to authority in the writing of literature. His own satires were inspired by Horace and Juvenal and in them he castigated the foibles and follies of the contemporary social and literary scene. He also wrote a mock-epic, *Le Lutrin*.

His most important critical work was *Art Poetique* (1674), in which he formulated in verse the literary principles of neo-classical school of literature. So dominant was his influence in literary circles that Boileau was often referred to as the *legislator de Parnasse* (legislator of Parnassus). He influenced the 18th Century English writers also.

1. 18. **bowmen**—philosophers.

19. **Des Cartes, Gassendi, and Hobbes**—“These are probably chosen as representative names, without any special reference to their views.”—Henry Craik.

Critical Note—It must be noted that not all the names on the side of the Moderns are targets of Swift's satire;

some of them he read with appreciation, as for example, Milton, Cowley, Des Cartes, Despreaux. In alluding to these names his purpose is not to disparage them as he does in the case of Perrault, Fontenelle, Dryden, and Bentley. He mentions Milton, Des Cartes, Boileau and Cowley simply as representative poets and writers of the Moderns, without, in any way, referring to their ideas.

19 Des Cartes—see above.

19. Hobbes—see above.

19. Gassendi—(1592-1655). Pierre Gassandi was a noted French philosopher and scientist of the 17th century. He took holy orders in 1617 and was appointed professor of philosophy at Aix the same year. He attacked the Aristotelian system of philosophy and the Cabalists. His views differed sharply from that of Des Cartes. He favoured the philosophy of Epicurus, in opposition to the philosophy of Des Cartes, a leading light of the times.

ll. 19.21. whose strength was such...fall down again—A characteristic satiric hit. These idealistic philosophers engaged themselves in highly abstruse metaphysical speculations which were far removed from the world of reality.

21-22. turn, like that of Evander, into meteors—For once Swift had been betrayed by his memory. The reference is not to Evander, but to Acestes. The name of Acestes is mentioned by Virgil in the *Aeneid*. He—a Sicilian—shot the arrow so high and fast that it caught fire from friction with air. Here is the quotation from Virgil's *Aeneid*, V, 21-32 :

“Only Acestes now remained, and he had already lost the palm. Yet none the less he aimed an arrow high into the air.....And then a sudden miracle, destines to prove of terrible presage, was presented to their eyes ; as afterwards the momentous outcome of it revealed, though when the prophets gave their alarming interpretation of this sign of their warning came too late. For the reed shaft of Acestes, as it flew amid floating clouds, caught fire ; it marked its trail with flames, burned away, and vanished into airy winds, like the shooting stars...”

22-23. like the cannon-ball, into stars—Another simile. The cannon-ball, when fired, goes high up and then bursts,

with the burning parts as they disappear into the limitless expanse of the sky appearing like meteors (shooting stars); in the like manner, the thoughts or speculations of these philosophers get completely detached from reality to be lost in obscure regions.

23. **Paracelsus**—(1493-1541). A famous Swiss historical figure. He was a physician who burned to discover the secrets of the world. So complete and total was his involvement in his work that legends soon grew up around him. He is said to have “delved deeply into alchemy and to have kept a small devil prisoner in the pommel of his sword.” He also worked as professor of medicine at Basle.

1, 23. **stink-pot flingers**—something which is highly offensive in smell. The reference, of course, is to the offensive chemicals used by Paracelsus in the course of his experiments.

24. **Rhaetia**—Paracelsus was believed to belong to the Alpine heights of Rhaetia.

25. **dragoons**—literally it means mounted infantrymen; here it refers to writers on medical subjects.

26. **Harvey**—(1578-1657). William Harvey was an English physician, physiologist and anatomist. His most significant discovery was the circulation of the blood which he expounded in 1628 in his essay, *the Motion of the Heart and the Blood*. The announcement of his discovery resulted in a furore and it was disparaged by Temple also. He wrote, “There is nothing new in astronomy to vie with the Ancients, unless it be the Copernean system; nor in physic, unless Harvey’s circulation of blood. But whether either of these be modern discoveries, or derived from old fountains is disputed.....if they are true, yet these two great discoveries have made no change in the conclusions of astronomy, nor in the practice of physic and so have been of little use to the world, though, of much honour to the authors.”

26. **aga.** chief officer.

26-30. Taking the cue from Temple, Swift hands out a mauling to Harvey and his followers. The satiric reference to their equipments makes the physicians appear not saviours, but as instruments of death.

l. 29-30. **infallibly killed without report**—The physicians are shown as most lethal warriors. They kill others without so much as making even the slightest noise.

31. **heavy-armed foot**—the historians. They are shown as having little or no interest in the combat and join the army more out of compulsion than conviction. Therefore, they are called mercenaries and heavy-armed.

32. **Guicciardini**—(1483-1540.) An Italian historian of the 16th century whose work, *Historia d' Italia*, was made available in English translation in 1579. His writings are characterised by a gruelling tediousness, which makes their reading a sort of punishment. Swift refers to this historian and lists him on the side of the moderns with obvious satiric intention.

32. **Davila**—(1576-1623.) An Italian historian who is known by his account of the struggles in France in the second half of the 16th century.

32. **Polydore Virgil**—(1470-1555) not to be confused with Virgil the epic poet. Polydore was an Italian who settled down in England and wrote a book called, *Historia Anglica* (History of England.)

32. **Buchanan**—(1506-1582), A Scottish writer. Though his major work is in the field of drama and verse, but he mentioned here as a historian account of Scotland, published in 1582.

32. **Mariana**—(1537-1624.) A Spanish Jesuit, often regarded as one of the greatest historians of Spain. Fame came to him on the publication of the History of Spain, written in Latin. His attempt to defend tyranny under certain circumstances earned him the hostility of many, among whom one may easily name Swift. His work was translated into English.

33. **Camden**—(1551-1623). An English historian. His well-known work is *Britannica*, which, after the literary fashion of the times, is written in Latin.

l. 33. **engineers**—the mathematicians,

34. **Regiomontanus**—Better known as Johann Muller, he was a famous German natural philosopher and mathematician. Born in 1436, and died in 1476.

34. **Wilkins**—(1614-1672). An English mathematician who

took an active part in the affairs and transactions of the Royal Society, which so frequently came under attack from Swift. As Craik points out, John Wilkins is being treated here as a typical representative of the Royal Society. His quaint and what then appeared to be fantastic writings must have prompted Swift to give him this dubious honour. Among his better known writings are *The Discovery of a World in the Moons*, *Discourse Concerning the Possibility of a Passage to the Moon* and *Philosophical Language*.

35. **Scotus**—See notes above.
35. **Acquinas**—(1225-1274). An Italian Scholastic philosopher known as the Angelic Doctor and Prince of Scholastics. He entered the Dominican Order and studied under Albert Magnus at Cologne where he also began his career as a teacher. His main contribution to the history of human thought is *Summa Theologiae*, which is a systematic survey of catholic theology and assigns to him “a rank of honour on a par with Aristotle and Augustine.” His philosophy, currently called Thomism, is based on the axiom that knowledge springs from the wells of reason and revelation.
35. **Bellarmino**—(1542-1621). The famous staunch supporter of Roman Catholicism. He, alongwith Acquinas, defended Roman Catholicism against the sweeping influence of Protestantism.
36. **of mighty bulk and stature**—numerically and in terms of physical strength, the army collected by the Moderns was a formidable one.
- 36-37. **but without either arms, courage or discipline**—Though numerically the Moderns were in an advantageous position as compared to their adversaries, yet their weakness lay in their lack of courage and discipline. Their arms, here literary excellence, were also inferior.

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1. **calones**—camp-followers or meanest servants. Hawkesworth says, “By calling this disorderly rout *calones* the author points both his satire and contempt against all sorts of mercenary scribblers, who write as they are commanded by the leaders and patrons of sedition, faction, corruption, and every evil work : they are styled *calones*

because they are the meanest and most despicable of all writers, as the *calones*, whether belonging to the army or private families, were the meanest of all slaves or servants whatsoever."

Critical Note—It is interesting to surmise what Swift must have said when a few years later he himself wrote controversial pamphlets on the requests of the political parties he had contact with, first Whigs, later, Tories.

1. **disorderly rout**—without any sense of discipline. Hacks can hardly be expected to know the discipline of letters.
1. **L'Estrange**—Sir Roger Lestrange, a noted English journalist of the later half of the 17th century. He wrote a number of controversial pamphlets and is here held up as the supreme example of hack writers.
2. **ragamuffins**—dirty people having no sense of morality and who indulge in looting and robbing others and such like dirty activities
3. **all without coats to cover them**—These cheap pamphlets were published without hard covers; they were usually paperbound. Hence they are said to have no coat to cover themselves with.

Summary of Para 16.

The Ancients, though few, had celebrated names to fight on their side.

5. **Homer**—the semi-legendary author of the Greek epic the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. He is the earliest epic poet that we know of.
5. **horse**—epic poet.
5. **Pindar**—(518-438 B. C.). The celebrated Greek lyric poet. His highly elaborate and regularly patterned odes—known as the Pindaric Odes—have won immortality for him. His power lies not in his ideas, but rather in an amazing splendour of language, rhythm and imagery, which has made his poetry impossible to translate and difficult to imitate. Some English poets did try to write odes on the Pindaric pattern.
5. **Euclid**—(c. 300 B. C.) Greek mathematician who founded a school at Alexandria, Egypt. He gave a new direction to geometry and his propositions still form a part of geometry text-books. His most significant work was *The*

Elements in which he dealt with Plane and Solid Geometry and Properties of Numbers.

7. **Horodotus**—(484-432 B. C.). Famous Greek historian. His great work, “*A History of the Greco-Persian Wars*,” brought him the title of ‘‘Father of History.’’ It consists of nine books, named after the nine Muses.
7. **Livy**—(59 B. C.-17 A. D.). A towering figure of the Augustan period in Roman history. A great prose writer, yet his fame rests chiefly on his writings concerning the history of Rome. He wrote the *Annals of the Roman People* which ran into 142 volumes of which only about one third are still extant.
1. 7. **Hippocrates**—(460-377 B. C.) Also known as ‘‘Father of Medicine,’’ Hippocrates, a Greek Physician, was a pioneer in his field. He attained fame by writing profusely on the art of healing. The Hippocratic Oath, still taken by physicians of several countries, laid down a code of ethics.
8. **Vossius**—(1618-1689). Issac Vossius was a classical scholar. He had an eventful life ; visited Italy, edited seven epistles of St. Ignatius, was royal librarian at Stockholm from 1649-52. He supported the Septuagint against the received chronology and wrote against Cartesianism. Also edited Pliny’s *Natural History* (1669). Alongwith Temple, Swift holds him up as a model of classical scholarship.

Summary of Para 17.

On hearing from Fame about the violent quarrel, Jupiter convenes a meeting of the gods to discuss it. Momus patronises the cause of the Moderns, while Pallas defends the Ancient. Jupiter reads the outcome of the impending battle in the book of fate, but refuses to divulge the information.

10. **violently tending to a decisive battle**—it was clear that the quarrel would lead to a bloody war between the disputants.
10. **Fame**—a deity created by Swift himself and not borrowed from Greek mythology as are other gods. Perhaps a personification of rumour, a point consistent with Swift’s

description of Fame as telling lies elsewhere but not before the gods.

12. **Jupiter**—the ruler of gods in Roman mythology. He occupies the same position which Zeus does in the Greek mythology and Indra in Hindu mythology.

ll. 15-16. **Jove, in great concern.....in the milky way**—An imitation of the epic tradition. In Homer and Virgil, the gods are intensely concerned with the goings on the earth and the fate of those whom they love. Therefore, when the Trojan War is being fought, the gods discuss the matter many times among them and no more than one occasion they fall out on this question. The gods of Homer play an important part in the *Iliad*. They turn events, reconcile otherwise impossible motives, rescue people who have got to be rescued ! They manipulate Achilleus, Aineias and Paris and intervene frequently in the affairs of the war. Virgil, in the *Aeneid*, represents gods and goddesses as taking an active interest in the fight. The gods of Swift too declare themselves deeply concerned in the controversy being waged between the two parties and later, when the battle begins help their favourites.

21. **Momus**—according to Hesiod, a god of primeval Night ; in Greek mythology, the personification of Criticism and fault-finding.

22. **Pallas**—Pallas Athene, the goddess of wisdom. It is significant that the Moderns have Momus, the god of Criticism, as their patron and the Ancients, the goddess of wisdom. This betrays the sympathies of the author and explodes his claim to impartiality and truthfulness.

23-24. **assembly was divided in their affections**—since the council of gods could not agree on the question as to which of the two parties was to be favoured by the gods.

24. **book of fate**--The heavenly record of things taking place in past, present and future. From it the gods can know the outcome of events taking place or which will take place as also the fate of individuals.

25-26. **Mercury**—the swift-as-lightening messenger of the gods.

30. **silently read the decree**—Jupiter secretly read the outcome of the impending battle, but refused to tell it to others because the gods were violently divided in their affections.

Summary of Para 18.

Jupiter calls minor gods who act as his servants, gives them certain message and asks them to attend the disputants in the regal library.

Critical Note—To realise his mock-epic satire, Swift creates his own supernatural machinery. A large number of lesser gods are depicted as servants of Jupiter ; they carry out the orders of the master. Though they never go near Jupiter, they communicate with him through a long hollow trunk. Among the human-beings, they are known as accidents or events.

35-36. ministering instruments in all affairs below—Through these lesser divinities. Jupiter intervenes in the affairs of human-beings and settles things according to his desire.

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- 1-2. **fastened to each other like a link of gallery-slaves**—An example of burlesque which is at once humorous and damaging. By equating the gods with galley-slaves (that is, slaves who are used for rowing ships), Swift is laughing at the little gods.
- 4.6. Swift maintains propriety in his description of the little gods. Being lower most in rank, they cannot be permitted to come near Jupiter ; therefore, they speak to him through a hollow trunk, receive his orders, and carry them out.
1. 7. **accidents or events**—Human-beings fail to find a rational explanation of the inexplicable turn in their fortunes which is the work of the ‘menial servants’ of Jupiter ; they, therefore, call such happenings ‘accidents or events.’
- 11-12. **disposed the parties according to their orders**—They influenced the minds of the warriors on both sides according to the instructions of Jupiter.

Summary of Para 19.

Momus got afraid about the fate of the Moderns and at once flew to a malignant deity, Criticism, to seek her help. He requests her to come to the aid of the Moderns who are under tremendous pressure from their adversaries.

14-15. ancient prophecy, which.....the Moderns—Momus

remembered a prophecy which went against the Moderns; he, therefore, felt afraid that his devotees might be crushed by the Ancients.

15. **bent his flight**—Now Momus decides to take an active interest in the fortunes of the Moderns and to somehow save them being defeated. He accordingly flies to a goddess, Criticism, to implore her to come to the rescue of his devotees.
16. **Criticism**—Like Fame, Criticism is a deity, created by Swift himself. She symbolises the rancour and jealousy which Swift thought characterised the writings of the Moderns.
17. **Nova Zambia**—the mountainous land in the Arctic region. Does Swift show an icy region as her living place to allegorically allude to the cold attitude of modern critics? The French critics, Perrault and Fontenelle, were certainly unemotional in their approach to literature and philosophy.
- 18-19. **Numberless volumes, half devoured**—The target of Swift's satire is that carping criticism which seeks not to understand but to half-understand to destroy. Since such quack critics make many volumes victims of their uninformed intelligence. Criticism is shown here sitting amidst a heap of mutilated books.
- II. 19-26. All the vices and inflated attitudes that accompany destructive criticism are personified here as blood relations of Criticism.
26. The goddess herself had claws like a cat. A cat has sharp claws to tear his victim. The claws have been given a symbolical value here and the fact that Criticism, too, possesses them, shows her destructive nature.
28. **resembled those of an ass**—so far as intelligence was concerned, Criticism was as foolish and unthinking as an ass.
- 28-30. Swift paints this ugly picture of Criticism in lurid colours. It should be noted that Swift himself is a master of destructive satire and specializes in the use of imagery of ugliness and filth. His picture of Criticism is built up with a profusion of images that cause repulsive feeling.
30. **her deit was overflowing of her own gall**—gall denotes bitterness and jealousy. Just as Swift has made short work

of the spider's claim by referring to the poison which he consumes and produces and which reflects his nature, in the same way, he exposes the true nature of Criticism by telling us that what she lives on is gall.

31. **her spleen was large**—spleen is a symbol of bad temper and irritation.

30-31. a horrible picture which causes nausea. Swift can go to any limit in pursuit of his target and to splash filth on it.

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II. 1-2. **now lying under the swords**—Momus is quite sceptical of the fighting power of his worshippers.

3. **build altars to our divinities**—Neither Momus nor Criticism will be left with any follower, once the Moderns are put to death by the Ancients.

Summary of Para 20.

Criticism falls into a reverie, eulogises herself for giving wisdom to infants; making school-boys critics, beaus, politicians, coffee-house-wits, correctors of style. She makes up her mind to speed immediately to the help of the Moderns.

7. **delivered himself**—spoken.

8 9. **left her to her own resentments**—she was sorry for having being so late in helping her worshippers.

9. **in a rage**—her anger is, of course, directed at the Ancients.

10. **soliloquy**—a speech in which one talks to oneself.

Critical Note—Criticism's soliloquy is a masterpiece of ironical writing. Lost in her own thoughts, the goddess recounts her exploits and the favours she distributes among her devotees; but what she considers as reflecting her glory and power is in fact a testimony to her abiding stupidity and bad temper.

11. **give wisdom to infants and idiots**—What Swift suggests is that it is an easy task now to pass opinion on works which can be evaluated by the learned only. He is puncturing the deflated egos of preposterous critics who, with their limited knowledge, consider themselves fit enough to sit in judgment upon works of great masters. Such critics are idiots and mentally no more than infants.

who are inspired by Criticism to exhibit their ignorance by offering foolish opinions.

II. 11-12. **children grow wiser than their parents**—A satiric hit at those who thought themselves superior to the ancients. One feels that at times Swift himself takes a rigid stand, as for example, his refusal to concede superiority to the Moderns even in the field of scientific knowledge and Philosophy.

12. **beaux**—fashionable youngmen of the age who were intellectually empty. Pope laughs at them in *The Rape of the Lock*.

13. **School-boys judges of philosophy**—It was most irritating for classical scholars to see the young university wits throwing an open challenge to the validity of ancient philosophy and thought. Temple laments this in his *Ancient and Modern Learning*. He writes: “A boy of fifteen is wiser than his father at forty, the meanest subject than his prince or governors; and the modern scholars, because they have for a hundred years past learned their lessons pretty well, are much more knowing than the Ancients, their masters.”

14. **sophisters**—young students.

14-15. **debate and conclude upon the depths of knowledge**—young students doubt the truth of ancient philosophy and offer judgment on its merits.

18. **stripling**—a boy of immature understanding.

18-19. **stripling spend.....their hands**—Young immature boys spend their property even before it actually comes to them; likewise they presume they have got sufficient knowledge to judge for themselves and so use up their power of judgment even before they have acquired mental maturity.

22. **upstart**—preposterous.

26. **hetacomb**—a hundred oxen.

Summary of Para 21.

The goddess arrived in the royal Library shedding her influence at many places where her devotees flourish, and observes the postures of the two parties.

1. 30. **infinite regions**—vast stretches.

32. **metropolis**—*i. e.*, London.

32. **blessings**—used ironically, meaning her wicked influence which causes jealousy and ill-temper in her devotees.

33-34. **Gresham and Covent Garden**—Gresham was the college where the Royal Society used to meet and Covent Garden was the favourite haunt of Coffee-house wits. Swift had an unfounded suspicion of the Royal Society. In *A Tale of a Tub* too he attacks some practices of its members. The coffee-house wits could not have hoped to be spared by him, since they represented the shallow Moderns.

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I. **virtuosos**—scientists who performed ingenious experiments. In *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift makes fun of the fantastic projects pursued by the projectors of Laputa.

Summary of Para 22.

The goddess is moved to pity on beholding Wotton, her son, and immediately assumes another shape to appear before him. She inspires Wotton to lead his troops immediately into the battlefield. She throws an ugly monster into his mouth to arouse him to action and instructs Dulness and Ill-Manners to attend to him during the encounter.

3. **tender cares of a mother**—As soon as she saw Wotton, her heart was filled with pity and tenderness for him.

I. 5-6. **the fates had assigned a very short thread**—It was believed that the fates control the life of mortals. The fates have a thread, and, when it is cut, the person dies. The life granted to Wotton by the fates was very short. This is a reference to the supposed end of Wotton's literary career at the hands of Temple and Boyle.

7-8. **whom an unknown father.....this goddess**—A personal satire which slanders the lineage of Wotton. Swift had a tendency to lapse into purely personal satire. His attack on Wharton, on Bentley, on the Duchess of Somerset earned him the title of the 'dreaded dean.' For his unforgiveable personal attack on the Duchess, he had to pay dearly.

11-12. **she cast about to change her shape**—as explained elsewhere, gods were supposed to have the power to assume any form or shape.

13. **dazzle his mortal sight.**—humans were supposed to be too weak to have a full look at the undisguised splendour of divinities.

14-15. **gathered up her person into an octavo compass**—she, therefore, assumed the shape of a book.

16. **arid**—dry.

18. **artfully strowed**—skillfully applied a black juice.

19. **decoction of gall and soot**—these two are important ingredients of the printer's ink.

23-24. **from the divine Bentley**—Notice how cleverly Swift ropes in Bentley and draws a parallel between the goddess and him, much to his disadvantage.

26-27. **vigour and opportunity of the day**—Criticism reproaches Wotton to let the energy of his supporters go waste by keeping them idle for and not taking advantage of the opportunity offered to attack the Ancients.

1. 28. **onset immediately**—she asks him to launch an immediate attack.

28-32. **she took the ugliest.....his brain**—yet another instance of Swift's employment of imagery of physical deformity and ugliness to attack his satiric target. Some critics have spoken of the obscenity of Swift and have drawn attention to the relish which the Dean shows in creating feelings of repulsion by employing nauseous images.

33-34. **Dulness and Ill-Manners**—Wotton is dull, since he cannot see and appreciate the beauty of classical literature ; he is ill-mannered because he had the impudence to challenge the scholarship and judgment of Temple.

35. **accountred**—equipped him (with dulness and ill-manners),

Summary of Para 23.

The author petitions for a hundred tongues to give an adequate description of the fierce battle that ensued between the two parties. Paracelsus engages Galen in an encounter.

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1. **the destined hour**—the fateful hour when the war was to begin.

2-3. **to make a particular description**—to give a graphic account.

3. **after the example of other authors**—following the example of other authors, Swift is here parodying the epic tradition of imploring divine help to give an adequate account of the great wars which form the subject-matter of epic poems. Homer, Virgil, Milton, they all had observed this tradition. Fielding and Swift parodied the tradition in *Tom Jones* and *the Battle* respectively. While Milton and Homer implore for spiritual strength and inner enlightenment to prove themselves equal to their tasks, Swift, describing the bloody battle between the books, asks for a hundred tongues and mouths to be able to describe the combats in a befitting manner.

ll. 7-9. Compare, Homer, *Iliad*, Book II, ll. 484-492 :

“Tell me now, you Muses who have your homes on
Olympus.
For you, who are goddesses, are there, and you know all
things,
And we have heard only the rumour of it and know
nothing.
Who then of those were the chief men and the lords of the
Danaans ?
I could not tell over the multitude of them nor name
them,
Not if I had ten tongues and ten mouths, not if I had
A voice never to be broken and a heart of bronze
within me,
Not unless the Muses of Olympia, daughters
Of Zeus of the aegis, remembered all those who came
beneath Ilion.”

Also compare Virgil, *the Aeneid*, Book VII :

“Muses, the time has come for you to throw Helicon wide open and inspire me to tell who were the kings who were then rallied for war, what manner of soldiers followed each of them in their ranks to throng the plains, who were the men who even in those far days were the flowers of Italy’s fertile land, and what arms expressed her spirit’s fire. For you, you are divine, and you have the gifts of memory and story ; but only

the faintest echo of the great tale has come down to me."

It is clear that in invoking the goddess who presides over history, Swift is following the epic tradition.

i. 7. **Paracelsus**—See Biographical Note given above.

8. **Galen**—(130-200 A. D.). This celebrated physician of the age of Marcus Aurelius was the author of a number of medical treatises. He was also a personal friend of the emperor.

10-11. **his point breaking in the second fold**—the attack of Paracelsus is rendered ineffectual as his javelin fails to pierce the shield. Allegorically, the meaning is that the new theories advanced by Paracelsus could not shake the position of the Ancient as a scholar of medicine.

12-13. **Hic pauca desunt**—her some words are missing. As we have pointed out elsewhere, when Swift does not want to bring his combats to a conclusion, or when he does not want to discuss in detail the respective merits of rival warriors, he slips out of the difficult position by using a very simple expedient. The manuscript is supposed to have suffered damage at some places and therefore certain portions are missing. See the Bookseller's Notice to the Readers.

15. **wounded aga on their shields**—Here Swift mentions only the fact of Harvey, a physician, fighting on the side of the Moderns, being seriously wounded, but no information is given as to who has wounded him and how? Perhaps Swift himself did not know with whom to match Harvey and how to bring him to bite the dust.

17-18. **Desunt nunnilla**—again the publisher informs that some lines are missing as a result of damage to the manuscript.

Critical Note—As Swift has not told us as to how Harvey was wounded and by whom, similarly he does not inform us whether he survives his injury or succumbs to it.

Summary of Para 24.

Next philosophers fight against philosophers. Aristotle aims his arrow at Bacon who escapes, but Des Cartes is hit by it and dies on the spot.

l. 20. **Bacon**—(1561-1616). Sir Francis Bacon was one of the leading lights of the Elizabethan England. He made significant contribution in the field of literature and philosophy. After spending some years in political activities, Bacon devoted the rest of his life to natural philosophy and literature. He introduced a new trend in philosophy by advocating inductive method. His unique approach influenced his own contemporaries and subsequent generations greatly. In the world of letters he will be remembered for his *Essays* which are remarkable for their worldly wisdom and practical advice and terseness of expression.

22. **missed the valiant modern**—The genius of Bacon had impressed Temple greatly and he had expressed his admiration for the achievement of the great Elizabethan. Following his patron, Swift treats Bacon with respect and shows him as escaping unhurt from Aristotle's attack.

24. **defect**—weak point.

24. **head-piece**—head-piece worn by battling soldiers.

28. **vortex**—yet another hit at Des Cartes' philosophical system. Des Cartes had expounded an elaborate theory regarding vortices, and very fittingly he himself is drawn into the vortex of death.

29-33. gap in the manuscript.

Summary of Para 25.

The epic poets now take on one another, but the single Ancient, Homer is more than a match for all the Moderns.

34. **mounted on a furious horse**—the reference is to his powerful narrative style in which he describes the rousing adventures of his valiant characters.

l. 37. **bore down all before him**—he swept down all opposition presented him by the feeble moderns.

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1. **Gondibert**—Gondibert is the hero of an epic poem written by William Davenant, a 17th century poet. To us the poem appears an unrelieved exercise in dull narrative, yet it won unstinted praise from contemporary critics and poets. Waller, Cowley and Hobbes vied with one another in eulogising it. One fails to see any substance in Hobbes's words that he had never seen a poem "that had

so much shape of art, health of morality, and vigour and beauty of expression" as Gondibert. Swift here falls foul of the poem and gets its hero slayed by the brave Homer.

2-3. **mounted on a staid, sober gelding**—As compared with the furious horse of Homer, Gondibert's horse is a tame one. The meaning may be that Davenant's verses did not have the quality of vigorous narration which Homer so unmistakably shows.

4. **docility in kneeling**—the dullness of verse which was accentuated by the use of rhymed quatrain.

5. **Pallas**—the goddess of wisdom.

8. **Him Homer overthrew**—Latin construction.

11. **Denham**—John (1615-1668). He gave to the 17th century poems of unequal quality, some good, some bad. One of his poems, *Cooper's Hill*, was much admired by his contemporaries, but later scholars did not share the same view. Writing about this poem, Henry Craik says, "It has no real epic character : and although it contains an occasional foretaste of the vigour of expression which Dryden was to bring to perfection, it has scarcely any other quality which would recommend it to the taste of our own day.....Compared with *Gondibert*, his work justified the half-divine descent with which Swift credits him."

II. 11-13. **father's side derived.....was of mortal race**—This is an ingenious explanation of the uneven quality of Denham's poems. His half-divine element is manifested in surprisingly good poems, while his mortal element is responsible for bad poems.

13-14. **The celestial part Apollo took**—After his death, the celestial part is collected by Apollo, who then turns it into a star in which form, it will shine for ever. The meaning is that Denham's better poems will survive time and find a permanent place in the history of literature.

14-15. **the terrestrial lay wallowing upon the ground**—his bad poems will soon pass into obscurity and oblivion.

15. **W-sl-y**—Samuel Wesley (1661-1735), the rector of Epworth, Lincolnshire. He was also bitten by the bug of poetry and wrote some poems, the best of them being *The Life of Christ*, described as a heroic poem.

16. **a kick of his horse's heel**—There is absolutely no confrontation between Homer and Wesley, the former being far the more superior. Poor Wesley succumbs not to any blow from Homer, but from just one kick from his horse. Indeed Homer's horse is more than a match for quite some Moderns.

16-19. Next Homer takes on the two Frenchmen who had spoken on the side of the Moderns most vociferously. In fact, they were the initiators of the debate in the *Academi francaise* and went to the extremity in their zeal, praising and went to the extremity in their zeal, praising the obviously lesser gifted Moderns and affirming their superiority over the great classical writers. They were opposed by Boileau and his associates who gave the palm to the Ancients.

i. 16. **Perrault**—Charles (1628-1703.) A French poet and critic. A member of the *Academi francaise*, he was employed by Colbert as an adviser in matters of art and letters. He is remembered for his part in the “*querelle des anciens st des modernes*” (the quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns. He was a staunch supporter of the Moderns. In his famous poem, *Siecle de Louis le Grand* (1687), he set the Moderns—Reginer, Malherbe, Moliere and others above the poets, of Greece and Rome. That he was by temperament opposed to authority, was again borne out in yet another significant work of his, *Parallele des anciens et des modernes*, which appeared from 1688 to 1697. In this, he made fun of the pedants and the authority.

18. **Fontenelle**—(Bernard de Bovier de (1657-1757.) A miscellaneous French writer who, alongwith Perrault, took a leading part in the celebrated controversy. He, too, wrote on the side of the Moderns and was opposed to servile obedience to authority. A man of wide learning and curiosity, he championed the cause of freedom in thought and, so, sided with the Moderns. He was a member of *Academi Francaise* as also of the Royal Society of England. In his attack on ancient learning, he was anticipating the attack which before long science was to make on religion.

Summary of Para 26

The next encounter is between Virgil and Dryden ; the former represents the Ancients, the latter, the Moderns. Virgil is looking for a fit adversary, equal in valour, when he beholds a warrior mounted on a big horse and himself wearing a huge helmet coming from the opposite side. But, to the surprise of Virgil, the opponent is no other than Dryden, who immediately accosts him as 'father' and exchanges his armour with the adversary.

Critical Comment—“Capital,” says Ricardo Quintana, “is the encounter between Virgil and Dryden.” It is indeed the most interesting one, with the trick of anti-climax being used to great effect. When we see Virgil, the Ancient is looking for an adversary of equal valour, so that he may not disgrace himself by exchanging blows with a mere fly. And when he sees a Modern, wearing an enormous helmet and riding a big horse, the size of the helmet and the great noise made by the horse raise expectations of a fierce encounter. Suspense builds up, as with Virgil, the reader guesses who this enormous warrior can be. Just when we are at the height of excitement, the author reveals the identity of the warrior in such a manner as to make him appear preposterous and to force the reader to laugh, and laugh heartily, at the Modern who has come to offer combat to Virgil. The warrior raises his big helmet and then from under it peeps out a small head which is recognised for Dryden’s.

The subsequent behaviour of Dryden is still more ludicrous. Afraid of exchanging blows with Virgil, he calls the Ancient his 'father' and, as a sign of amity between them, proposes an exchange of armour, in which process, Virgil is the loser, since his armour is of gold (representing the quality and excellence of his poetic nanner) and Dryden’s is of rusty iron (suggesting an inferior position for him when compared with Virgil.)

- l. 20-21. **shining armour**—suggesting the poetic excellence of Virgil’s achievement and that his glory has remained undimmed through the centuries.
- l. 21. **completely fitted to his body**—that is to say, the dignified epic mould was a fit medium for the genius of Virgil ; his gifts as a poet were equal to his arduous and demanding

task. Compare this with Dryden's ill-fitting loose armour which suggests that the genius of Dryden was not quite capable of writing heroic verses.

22. **dapple-grey steed**—Compare this horse with Dryden's horse. The latter's horse is reddish-brown, suggesting that Dryden is not an extraordinary poet, just a common one like his horse.

22. **the slowness of whose pace**—refers to the slow and dignified movement of Virgil's verse. It may be remarked that Virgil makes use of images, symbols and long drawn out vowel-sounds to enrich his verse.

24-25. **to find an object worthy of his valour**—Virgil does not want to insult his armour by engaging a less gifted opponent in combat. He wants a true adversary to test his own power and to have the satisfaction of vanquishing a valiant soldier.

25. **sorrel gelding**—reddish-brown horse. Such horses are quite common. This suggests the commonness of Dryden's poetry as opposed to the genuine originality and excellence of Virgil's.

26. **monstrous size**—A satiric hit at Dryden's self-professed and self-eulogised claim to greatness in the poetic world. Dryden used to append a multitude of prefaces, notes, apologies, dedications etc. to his works in order to impress others and to force a conviction of his greatness as a writer. Swift has made fun of this habit in *A Tale of A Tub*.

26-27. **a foe, issuing from.....enemy's squadrons**—Swift is deliberately raising expectations of a fierce encounter. The size of the horse and that of the halmet and the fact that the 'foe' issues from 'among the thickest of enemy's squadrons, raises the hope that the enemy is easily the most valiant of the Moderns and has come out for a show down with Virgil. But what follows is an anti-climax.

ll. 27-28. **his speed was less than his noise**—implies disparagement and compares unfavourably with the imposing, dignified movement of Virgil's horse.

29. **dregs of his strength**—the strength that remained in the old age.

29. **high trot**—not long galloping steps, but short steps in

which legs are raised unnecessarily high ; hence inspite of effort there is no speed.

Does this refer to the bombast and rant that one so frequently comes across in the plays of Dryden ?

32. within the throw of a lance—within fighting distance. Swift is building up the excitement high only to puncture it in a most unceremonious way.

32-33. the stranger desired a parley—The first anti-climax comes when the supposed furious warrior, instead of clashing with Virgil straightforward, desires a parley as if the two were friends.

33. parley—talk.

32-35. When the warrior lifts up his helmet, one expects to find a face of some really accomplished soldier. But much to the surprise and amusement of all, the timid Dryden peeps out from it.

35. the brave Ancient suddenly started—Virgil had never hoped to see the small head of Dryden, supporting the huge helmet.

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1. for the helmet was nine times too large for the head—Swift questions Dryden's title to being called a poet. The mantle of a poet ill-fitted him and for all his claim to greatness in the field of poetry, he was, alleges Swift, unworthy of living in company of poets.

2. 3. like the lady in a lobster—A very amusing simile. Dryden's head in relation to the huge helmet was like a lady's head, wearing a hood, detected "in one part of the lobster's shell." The lobster's shell is very large, whereas the lady's head is very small.

3. lobster—shellfish.

3-4 like a mouse under a canopy of state—Dryden's head under the big helmet was like the sight of a small mouse hiding under the royal canopy.

4. shrivelled—shrunken.

4. bea—*a fop* ; a shallow fashionable young man.

5. periwig—something like a canopy. periwig—wig ; head-covering of false hair.

6. **sounding weak and remove**—Dryden in this poetry and verse-plays, aped the manner of other heroic poets and so his voice appears feeble and coming from a distance.
- 7-8. **called him father**—Dryden had translated Virgil's *Aeneid* and in the Introduction he said : "I must acknowledge that Virgil in Latin, and Spenser in English, have been my masters."
8. **large deduction of genealogies**—by examining the long line of ancestors on both sides.
10. **an exchange of armour**—exchange of armour was a sign of amity. Dryden does not want to fight against Virgil.
- 11-14. **Virgil consented.....rusty iron**—Though Virgil's armour was of gold and that of Dryden of rusty iron, yet Virgil agreed to the proposed exchange, because a goddess, Diffidence, had cast a mist before his eyes and he could not see the difference.
- 11-12. **Diffidence**—here personified as a deity. Ordinarily it would mean that Virgil was too modest to turn down Dryden's request.
17. **came to the trial**—when the time came for the two soldiers to match their strength.
- 17-18. **utterly unable to mount**—notice Dryden's awareness of his own weakness and consequent unwillingness to fight Virgil.
- 18-22. again, a gap in the manuscript.

Summary of Para 27.

Next the encounter between Lucan & Blackmore. Lucan would have killed Blackmore, a Modern, had not Aesculapius intervened to save him. Realising that some deity is helping Blackmore, Lucan gives up the battle.

23. **Lucan**—Marcus Annaeus Lucanus flourished in the 1st century A. D. This Roman epic poet at first won the favour of Emperor Nero, who later on grew jealous of his immense popularity as a poet. Consequently, he forbade him to give public recitals. Lucan resented this and joined in a conspiracy against Nero. When discovered, he was condemned to death by suicide. His most important work is *Pharsalia* in which he deals with the struggle between Caesar and Pompey.

26. **Blackmore**—(1650-1729). An English physician and poet. He served as physician to Queen Anne. During his leisure hours, he composed poems of indifferent quality. One of his poems, *Creations*, received warm applause from Dr. Johnson. In his other works too, Swift laughs at this pretentious poet whom he considers as a fit successor to Flecknoe.

27. **One of the mercenaries**—since Blackmore wrote poetry in his spare hours and was not a dedicated soul.

l. 30. **Aesculapius**—the Roman god of medicine

31-33. Lucan realises that some god must be protecting his adversary, for his javelin never misses its mark.

33. **what mortal can contend with a god**—Lucan being a human-being, he cannot match the power of a god and, so, gives up the fight.

35-36. Lucan gives Blackmore a pair of spurs and receives back a bridie as a sign of amity between the two erstwhile rivals.

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4. **Creech**—(1659-1700). A noted translator who made available in English the works of a number of an ancient writers, including the verses of Lucretius, the odes, satires, and Epistles of Horace, parts of Lutarch, 13th satire of Juvenal, and minor Latin and Greek works. He committed suicide in 1700, from disappointed love and pecuniary difficulties.

5. **the shape of Horace**—a dig at the failure of Creech to capture the spirit of Horace in his translations; what he produced was not Horace, but a shape of Horace.

6. **flying posture**—The more Creech tried to capture 'Horace' in his translations, the farther he (Horace) receded from him.

9. **Ogleby**—a 17th century English printer and translator. He produced copious translations of Homer, Virgil and Horace which brought him a short-lived reputation. His translations were distinguished not by literary excellence rather by their excellent get up and production.

Summary of Para 28.

Next we see fierce combats between Pindar on the one hand and a host of Moderns on another, in all of

which Pindar emerges the proud victor. Among his victims are Oldham, Afra Behn, Cowley and others.

l. 11. **Oldham**—Johan (1653-1683). A satirist who also wrote some Pindaric odes and that's why he is mentioned in connection with Pindar. He was paid a warm tribute by Dryden in a poem written on his death :

“Farewell ! to little and to lately known,
Whom I began to think and call my own.”

Critical Note—The blank spaces in the sentence show that Pindar killed some other poets also whose names are not mentioned here. May be Swift could not decide which names to put here, but he wanted to increase the number of persons slain by Pindar so as to establish the Ancient's unquestionable greatness.

12. **Afra the Amazon**—Mrs. Aphra Behn (1640-89) was an English novelist, dramatist and poet. She was the first British professional woman writer. For a few years she worked as a spy in Antwerp. Her best known novel, *Oronooko*, draws on her childhood experiences.

She also composed some Pindaric poems and for this reason she is here cited as one of the Moderns pitched against Pindar.

12-13. **never advancing.....agility and force**—the reference is to the complicated rhythmic structure of the Pindaric ode.

15. **Cowley**—For Biographical Note, See above.

Cowley also wrote the Pindarics and he is presented as the main rival of the Ancient.

17. **imitating his address**—Cowley imitated the manners of Pindar. It should be remembered that Cowley wrote a number of Pindarics in which he borrowed the structure, style, dignified expression, etc. of the odes of Pindar.

l. 22. **fell ineffectual to the ground**—if it was the intention of Cowley to excel Pindar himself in writing the Odes, his ambition did not materialise, even as his javelin, aimed at the Ancient, proved ineffectual.

l. 23. **so large and weighty**—probably an allusion to the massive dignity and elaborate structure of Pindar's compositions.

24. **as cavaliers are in our degenerate days**—a sarcastic com-

ment on the quality of achievement of poets flourishing in the days of Swift.

The trick of enlarging the object by comparison is borrowed from Milton. See the similes used in *Paradise Lost*. Compare, for instance, Milton's description of the spear of Satan (Book I. pp. 292-94)

“His spear—to equal which the tallest pine
Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the mast
Of some great admiral, were but a wand.”

27-28. **luckily opposed the shield**—Cowley stopped the mighty javelin with the shield given him by Venus.
28. **Venus**—the goddess of love and beauty in Roman mythology.

Critical Note—The shield given him by Venus which saves the life of Cowley is not without allegorical meaning. Cowley had written a number of love poems, which were published as *Mistress* poems. When Cowley had lost much reputation as a writer of the Pindarics, it was the popularity of the *Mistress* poems which kept his fame alive.

30. **aghast**—terrified.
30-31. **knew not where he was**—Cowley was stunned by the incident.
1. 35. **ransom**—money paid to secure release of a captured person.

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1. **carcase**—dead body.
3. **cleft**—cut.
7. **This Venus took**—Swift suggests the Cowley's future reputation will rest upon his love poems, and not on the Pindarics.
- 7-12. To make his account of the transformation of one part of Cowley into a dove appear plausible, Swift provides an elaborate account of the incident.
8. **ambrosia**—the food of gods.
9. **amaranth**—a heavenly plant supposed to bear blossoms that never fade.
12. **dove**—Venus's chariot is supposed to be driven by a pair of dove. It is therefore appropriate that Venus should

turn Cowley into a dove and yoke him to her chariot.

Summary of Para 29.

The forces of the Moderns were demoralised and were contemplating a retreat, when Bentley took upon himself the task of encouraging them and to rouse their sagging spirits by killing some ancient chief. He excelled in the art of railing and doing mischief and had a wonderful opinion of himself. He spoke to his troops contemptuously, alleging that they merely sat idle and waited for others to kill an Ancient to loot the spoils. He had a brush with Scaliger and claimed the right to keep himself the spoils of any Ancient whom he might kill in encounter.

19-20. **in person most deformed of all the Moderns**—yet another example of personal invective.

ll. 20-21. **without shape or comeliness**—In his personal appearance he was ugly.

22-23. **His armour was patched up of a thousand incoherent pieces**—the allusion is to the numerous quotations which were liberally sprinkled throughout all his writings. These quotations were mostly from famous poets and writers. Swift therefore refers to his writings as a patch-work. Smith has the following observation to make: “Bentley’s critics sneered at his numerous quotations (which they said he got Lexicons) and at his studies of the fragment of Greek poets.”

25. **Etesian winds**—trade winds that come from the Mediterra-neans.

27. **tainted**—corrupted.

28. **copperas**—an ingredient of ink.

28. **gall**—another ingredient of ink.

29-30. **atramentous quality**—an ink-like black liquid.

30. **malignant**—bitter.

31. **a flail**—a club which can be used to wound others.

33. **ordure**—excrement, which here symbolically stands for the filthy and offensive language used by Bentley in attacking his enemies.

Critical Note—As we have also remarked elsewhere, Swift excels in the art of ranging his adversary by associating with him images of filth and nausea. The picture of

Bentley given above is an example of what Swift could do once he was provoked by his enemy. There is little doubt that personal dislike loomed large in the lurid portrait of Bentley given here. Not only his scholarship and knowledge, but his physical appearance and general behaviour also come under the lash of Swift's stinging whip.

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1. 3. **for his talent of railing**—The special power of Bentley lay in his ability to abuse others. The allusion is to his hard-hitting style of writing and the many controversial treatises written by him.

2-3. **The generals made use.....his leaders.**
 Bentley being an expert in the art of railing, the Moderns did not mind giving him all opportunities to exercise his special gift against the Ancients. But, on occasions when he felt himself hurt by the behaviour of the Moderns towards him, he would turn upon them with equal energy and vehemence. In this, he resembled a wounded elephant who turns against his own master and tramples him under.

10-15. Swift provides a practical demonstration of Bentley's ability to abuse others.

15. **constituted**—appointed.

23. **Scaliger**—the reference seems to be to Joseph Justus Scaliger (1540-1609) whose methods in controversy were condemned by Boyle in *Examination*. Bentley, however, defended Scaliger in the *Preface to the Dissertations*. The scolding handed out to Bentley by Scaliger looks all the more effective for this reason.

23. **Miscreant prater**—Notice the opinion of one whom Bentley had defended. Scaliger does not mince his words and calls Bentley a wretched babbler.

25-26. **The malignity of.....nature**—Bentley's innate malignity turns to ill use all those gifts which nature has been pleased to give him.

27. **barbarous**—savage.

27. **humanity more inhuman**—once again, it is a reference to the supposed uncourteous and uncivilised conduct of Bentley. Though he claimed to be a scholar of classical

languages and literature (commonly known as humanity) but in conduct he was inhuman.

1. 31. **pedant**—a person who pretends to be learned.

Summary of Para 30.

Bentley resolved to perform some great feat, by means fair or foul. Accompanied by Wotton, he set out towards the camp of the rival party, hoping to find some undefended or sleeping Ancient to satisfy his thirst for revenge. Soon he saw two Ancients sound asleep at a little distance with their armour hanging on a tree. They drew the lots and Bentley got the chance. As Bentley was about to strike Aesop with his flail, the latter turned, for he dreamt that an ass had broken loose and was about to kick him. Bentley, thereupon, left the two Ancients and went in search of his friend, Wotton.

Critical Note—The mock-epic dominates this passage as nowhere else in the book. Notice the long-tail simile comparing Bentley and Wotton with two mongrel curs. The introducing words “as when” are the stock-in-trade of epics and Swift too uses them. Notice also the pompous, highly deflated diction of this passage. The moon darting her perpendicular rays, the resplendent visages of the two friends, the joining in partnership of two mongrel curs to ‘inade the folds of some rich grazier, are all examples of the mock-epic.

36-37. **half choked with spleen**—Bentley was boiling over with anger and so unable to speak.

37. **withdrew**—from the group of the Moderns, in order to finalise his plans to perform some great feat to establish his reputation.

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2-3. **by policy or surprise**—by strategy or sudden attack.

1. 3. **to attempt some neglected quarter**—Bentley is shown as a coward who dare not face the challenge of a fight; he is, therefore, on the look out to discover some camp which is defenceless and where he may hope to get the better of his adversary by catching him unaware and unprepared. This is an allegorical account of Bentley’s attack on Aesop and Phalaris, the two ancient writers. As has been said in the *Introduction* and elsewhere also, Temple

had praised these two writers in his *Essay*, but their authorship was challenged by Bentley.

4. **carcasses** : dead bodies. Notice Swift's insinuation : he means to say that all those who were killed were the Moderns and not a single Ancient fell.

7. **Aldroyandus's tomb**—Ulisse Aldrovandi, a naturalist of Bologna. He was famous for his industry and sense of dedication to his work and produced many volumes on natural history. It is said that this unceasing hard labour cost him his life and eyesight. "Swift represents this gigantic work (the volumes of Aldrovandi), which he may have seen cumbering the shelves of the Royal Library, as its author's tomb."

8. **declining sun** — epic diction.

10. **haply**—another epic expression meaning 'by chance'.

9-12 **Critical Note**—Bentley and Wotton do not want to take any chances and are not ready to risk an open combat. Therefore they are in search of some wounded Ancient or a sleeping hero in a place away from the main camp so that no help may come to his rescue and they may emerge victors without encountering serious opposition.
remote—far away from the main camp.

12-15 The *Battle* has some very interesting similes on the pattern of the long-tail or homeric similes found in the *Iliad*, or more recently in *Paradise Lost*. In Homer and Milton, such similes provide a welcome pause in the action and add an element of the picturesque to the main narrative. Swift borrows the tradition, but he uses it in his characteristic satiric way, to belittle his adversary by offering a comparison with some loathsome or trivial object. Here Bentley and Wotton are equated with greedy dogs who prowl about in the darkness of night in search of their food. The simile is interesting not only in the highly amusing comparison so instituted but also for the use of epic diction which ill agrees with the petty and most unheroic intentions of the two friends. The use of periphrastic diction to describe petty adventure goes against Wotton and Bentley.

1. 12. **As when**—this is the usual way in which epic similes are introduced by Homer, Virgil and Milton.

12. **mongrel curs**—street dogs of a low breed.
12. **native**—innate ; belonging naturally.
13. **provoke and join in partnership**—the innuendo is that the valued friendship between the two is based on ulterior motives and each looks to the other for help in furthering his selfish interests.
14. **folds**—where sheep are kept.
15. **grazier**—sheep.
15. **with tails depressed**—implying cowardice and sly behaviour.
15. **lolling tongues**—their tongues are always hanging out to show their covetous nature.
16. **conscious moon**—the moon is shown as knowing the nefarious plans of Bentley and Wotton and throws her ‘perpendicular rays’ at them in order to deter them.
- 15-18. **notice the use of epic diction**—Also notice the subtle suggestion that Bentley and Wotton are by nature intolerant of any beautiful thing.
21. **scouts the plain**—looks round to spot an easy victim.
- 22-24. Bentley and Wotton are pleased to get what other has been left over by other vultures of criticism. In other words, these two occupy the lowest position among low and abominable critics.
24. **lovely, loving pair of friends**—hints at the unnatural relationship between the two.
26. **two shining suits of armour**—i. e. Aesop and Phalaris whose authorship of the *Fables* and the *Epistles* questioned by Bentley and whose credit as authors did suffer some injury as a result of Bentley’s fierce onslaught.
26. **shining suits of armour**—allegorically stands for the wide popularity enjoyed by Aesop and Phalaris as authors respectively of the *Fables* and the *Epistles*.
- 28-29. **pursuing of this adventure fell to Bentley**—When Wotton and Bentley were engaged in waging the celebrated literary warfare against Temple, it was Bentley who threw down a positive challenge to Aesop’s authorship of the *Fables* and Phalaris’s authorship of the *Epistles*. Hence here Bentley gets the chance to deprive the two Ancients of their shining suits of armour.

30-32. a satiric hit at the critical methods of Bentley.

34. **flail**—the wooden weapon which Swift has earlier described Bentley as carrying in his hand.

35. **Affright interposing**—Bentley was terrified at the monstrosity of his own act.

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3. **a most vile poetaster**—a most wretched, worthless poet.
Iambooned him—attacked him by writing a scurrilous piece of satire.

1. 4. **got him roaring in his bull**—It is said that Phalaris had got a brazen bull made for punishing those who incurred his displeasure. The subtle suggestion is that Bentley deserves to be roasted alive in the bull for having shown the impudence of attacking the reputation of Phalaris.

It is interesting to note that Charles Boyle, in his *Examination*, alludes to this gruesome ceremony while referring to Bentley's attack on Phalaris and threatens that Bentley should not presume himself safe. “Dr. Bentley is perhaps by this time, or will suddenly be satisfied, that he also has presum'd a little too much upon his distance ; but it will be too late to repent, when he begins to bellow.”

6. **ass**—another damaging reference to Bentley.

Bentley's attempt to prove *Aesop* and *Phalaris* spurious, is likened to the unmannerly and utterly disgusting ways of an ass.

Summary of Para 31.

Meanwhile Wotton had wandered far away and came near the fountain sacred to Apollo, Helicon. He attempted to drink from it, but Apollo, who patronises true, not spurious men of letters, intervened to frustrate him in his effort.

II. **some enterprize**—Like Bentley, Wotton too will like to perform a deed of some magnitude. Only their ambitions appear ludicrous when one thinks of their capacities as portrayed by Swift.

Swift perhaps wants to suggest that the selfimposed and self-eulogised task of Bentley and Wotton was beyond

them, and in being blind to this reality they were merely displaying their ignorance and foolhardiness.

I. 13. **Helicon**—the fountain sacred to Apollo, the god of poetry and music, and the Muses. Its waters were supposed to have the quality to inspire poets.

I5-I6. **he essayed to raise the water**—Wotton's attempt to drink from Helicon signifies his desire to be recognised as a man of letters.

I8. **Apollo**—the god of poetry and music. It is only appropriate that Apollo should intervene and save the pure water of Helicon from being defiled by a spurious scholar.

20-26. a satiric hit at the pedants who with their shallow learning thought themselves as supreme judge of the excellence or otherwise of the works of great masters.

As a punishment for those who with impure motives try to drink from Helicon, Apollo had devised a trick. At the bottom of the fountain, there was a thick layer of slime and mud (standing for the dullness of pedantry). When the wrong person tried to drink from it, he, in his anxiety to drink deep, touched the bottom and got nothing except mud and slime.

25. **unhallowed**—impure.

Summary of Para 32.

In his plight Wotton looked towards the fountain-head and saw two heroes quenching their thirst with its pure water. One of them he recognised for Temple and immediately resolved to attack him. Imploring goddess Criticism for help, he threw his lance at his adversary, but failed to injure him. This impudence of Wotton enraged Apollo, who went to Boyle in the shape of Atterbury and asked him to take revenge on the modern. Boyle pursued his victim fiercely who was in the meanwhile joined by Bentley. After Bentley's attack on Boyle proves ineffectual, the latter pierces and transfixes both the friends by a single spear. Thus Wotton and Bentley, the moderns, met their end. The final result of the war is not known, for the manuscript is supposed to have been damaged and its last portions are missing.

I. 28. **one he could not distinguish**—i. e., Boyle.

30-31. **drinking large draughts**—signifies that Temple had read deeply in classical literature.

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1. no modern can dare challenge Temple in an open fight.
3. **mother**—According to the parentage of Wotton described earlier, his mother is Criticism.
3. **Fame**—signifies rumour.
7. Only the first part of the request is granted, the other half is scattered by a wind sent by Fate. Accordingly, Wotton succeeds in flinging his lance at Temple, but fails to hit him.
10. **brandishing**—waving the lance to impart its utmost force.
Critical Note—Wotton's lance stands for his *Reflections*, in which he had questioned the validity of Temple's judgment.
15. **it fell to the ground**—Wotton's attack proves ineffectual. Swift suggests that, though succeeded in publishing the *Reflections*, criticising Temple's viewpoint, yet his misdirected enthusiasm did no harm to Temple's reputation as a scholar.
- 19-20. **so foul a goddess**—Criticism.
- 20-21. **put on the shape of**—“This doubtless refers to Atterbury, who was Boyle's chief inspirer in his *Examination of the Dissertation* published in 1698.”

—Henry Craik.

- II. 27-32. **Critical Note**—Another highly effective long-tail simile. By comparing Boyle to a lion and Wotton to an ass, Swift annihilates the latter and at the same time same presents a most amusing picture of a lion pursuing a foolish donkey almost against his will.
- 27-28. **Libyan plains**—the plains of Lybia, an African country.
28. **Araby desert**—desert of Arabia.
- old **sire**—old father (who is unable to hunt for himself).
31. **a wild ass**—Once more Swift uses the trick of anti-climax to give a sharp edge to his satire and to make the adversary appear ludicrous. The first time we saw him employ the anti-climax was in the encounter of Virgil and Dryden and there too he had made Dryden appear most ludicrous and trivial. The lion goes out expecting to find some

tiger, but instead discovers an ass braying in the wilderness.

- 31. **braying importune**—untimely brayings.
- 31-32. **affronts his ear**—The lion not being used to the noise made by the ass, feels offended.
- 34. **Echo**—personified as a nymph.
- 34-35. **like her ill-judging sex**—Notice Swift's sneer against women. There doubtless was a cynical trait in Swift's character. In some of his later poems he painted a most revolting picture of women.
- 35. **repeats much louder**—Echo, the nymph, was answering back the sound and the tumult so produced was intolerable to the lion.
- 36. **philomela's song**—According to a legend, philomela was the daughter of Pandion. She was changed into a nightingale.

Echo was repeating the brayings of the ass as if the sound was a song sung by Philomela.

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- II.5-6. **discovering the helmet and shield of Phalaris**—Boyle saw in the hand of Bentley the helmet and shield of his friend Phalaris. As described earlier in the book, Bentley had stolen the armour of Aesop and Phalaris while the two ancients were asleep.
- 6-7. **his friend**—Charles Boyle brought out a new edition of the *Epistles* of Phalaris and hence the allusion to his friendship with the great writer.
- 7. The statement that Boyle had recently polished and gilded the armour of Phalaris would mean that he had added to the popularity of Phalaris by bringing out a new edition of his *Epistles*.
- 9-10. **fain would he be revenged on both**—Boyle was strong and valiant enough to face the two simultaneously.
- 11-14. A homely simile and a very apt one too.
- 18. **Phalanx**—Finding that it was difficult to escape from the attack of Boyle the two friends decided to fight it out and with this intention took up their positions.
- 19. **Pallas**—the goddess of wisdom defends Boyle against the attack of Bentley.

24. **compacted**—stood near to one another.

31. **shared his fate**—Boyle transfixes them together by a single lance.

3I-36. **As when a skilful cook.....joined in their death—**
Nothing in the book is so delightful as this simile. It is quite common for a cook to tie woodcocks together and to pierce them by an iron pin to facilitate the act of roasting. In the same manner, Boyle pierced the two friends by a single lance, thus joining them in death even as they had been together in life.

l. 36. **Charon**—In greek mythology, Charon is the boatman who ferries the souls of the dead across the river Styx.

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I. **half his fare**—Swift adds insult to injury by suggesting that they had been so closely joined in death that they appeared one and so would effect economy while crossing the Styx.

SOME IMPORTANT PROBLEMS

1. What were the dominant literary and philosophical tendencies of the Augustan Age ? Discuss with special reference to the views and works of Jonathan Swift.
2. Briefly discuss the political views of Swift. Will it be correct to call him a political turn-coat ?
3. The Augustan Age is often described as an age of Prose. Do you agree with this view ? Give examples to support your answer.
4. Examine the Nature and Function of satire.
5. The aim of the satirists is “too mend the world as far as they are able.” (Swift’s words). Examine the truth of this observation with reference to the writings of Swift.
6. Trace the development of English Prose Style during the 17th Century.
7. Write a note on the Prose style of Swift. Illustrate its main features by quotations from his works.
8. What are the various devices used by Swift in his satire.
9. Briefly comment on Swift’s use of the mask in his satires.
10. “It is for his satire that Swift is read, and will continue to be read.” Discuss.
11. Show in what various ways and at how many levels does the irony of Swift operate ? Give illustrations.
12. Examine and comment on the major themes of Swift’s satire.
13. Write a note on wit, humour and sarcasm in the satire of Swift.
14. Determine Swift’s place in the history of English Literature.
15. Briefly describe the background of the *Battle of the Books*.
16. What was Swift’s attitude towards Modern Learning ? Does the *Battle* suffer on account of the stand taken by him ?

17. "The *Battle of the Books* was on Swift's part the forcing of a personal issue." (Ricardo Quintana). Examine the above remark.
18. Examine *the Battle* as a mock-heroic.
19. Write an essay on Swift's use of the allegory in the *Battle*.
20. "Swift's *The Battle of the Books* is a satire on Ancient-Modern controversy rather than a contribution to it." Discuss.
21. Do you think that *the Battle* is a "full and true account" of the battle, as is claimed by the Author ?
22. Discuss Swift's use of the parody in *the Battle*. Give examples.
23. Critically examine Swift's use of the supernatural in the *Battle*.
24. Bring out the significance of 'the spider and the bee' episode.
25. Briefly describe and offer suitable comments on the encounter between Virgil and Dryden.
26. Consider the *Battle* as a satire of pedantry,
Write a note on Swift's use of the mask in the *Battle*.

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